

UNIVERSITY OF ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE



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MEDITATIONS

ON

The Mysteries of Faith and the Epistles and Gospels

For Each Day and the Principal Feasts of the Year.

BY A MONK OF SEPT-FONTS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
BY THE RELIGIOUS OF THE VISITATION,
OF WILMINGTON, DEL.

REVISED AND EDITED BY
REV. FERREOL GIRARDEY, C. SS. R.

"Thy law is my meditation." (Ps. cxviii, 77.)

First Volume.

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✠ JOANNES J. GLENNON,
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PREFACE.

The Sisters of the Visitation of Wilmington, Del., have conferred a great benefit on the Catholics of all English speaking countries by translating the following beautiful meditations, meditations so full of lively faith and of sweet unction, as to deeply impress all who make use of them. The late Bishop Becker of Savannah, who had previously filled the See of Wilmington, greatly encouraged the Sisters in their labor of love, and, after perusing their translation, wrote under date of September 12th, 1895, the following words of appreciation: "These very thoughtful meditations suit every believer. Their beauty is incomparable, for they are simplicity itself. We have been both edified and instructed whilst merely reading the translation. It seems to be correct, and is given in terse English. We highly commend the work, and deem it worthy of approbation."

The translators say that their translation has been a work of love, having the sanction of obedience. They humbly hope that it will receive the blessing of God and be "a love-lighted torch" to guide many souls heavenward, bringing to them, as it did to the translators, peace and consolation. These meditations are well calculated to benefit not only ecclesiastics and religious, but also the pious laity.

The editor, in order to adapt the work to the wants and devotions of our time and country, has added the following meditations, taken principally from the Medi-

tations of Father Bronchairn, C. SS. R. — Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; — for the first Friday of every month, — for the feasts of St. Francis Xavier, St. Paul of the Cross, St. Catharine of Siena, St. Philip Neri, St. Antony of Padua, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, St. Aloysius Gonzaga, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, St. Vincent de Paul, St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori, St. Jane Frances de Chantal, Holy Name of Mary, the Holy Rosary, and St. Stanislaus Kostka.

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First Sunday of Advent.

The three Advents of Jesus Christ.

I. POINT.

“Then they shall see the Son of Man coming.”

(Luke XXI, 27.)

Saint Bernard distinguishes three kinds of Advents of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the first Christ came to us in the weakness of the flesh; in the second He comes to us by the virtue of the Holy Ghost; in the third He will come to exercise His justice upon us, to punish and destroy sin by His power. In the first He came to suffer and die; in the second He comes to sanctify us and to apply to us the merits of His life and death; in the third He will come to judge the world.

II. POINT.

Jesus Christ came to us by His Incarnation, to be our light and our guide, to point out to us the way that leads to Him. He still comes to us every day, to strengthen our hearts, to animate them and impart His grace to them, to enable them to overcome the obstacles that would turn them aside from the way to life. It is especially in the Blessed Eucharist, that He produces these effects, nourishing our souls with the life-giving “bread which came down from heaven” (John VI, 33), and enabling them to walk, by the power of this divine food, even to the mountain of God. In His third advent He will come to demand the fruits of the first and second visits. “I come quickly,” said He, “and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to his works”

(Apoc. XXII, 12). I came down from heaven to earth, He will then say, to enable you to ascend from earth to heaven. Why have you walked the crooked ways? What profit have you derived from My labors, My sufferings, My blood, and My death? What has become of My graces, and where are the fruits of justice, of innocence, and holiness, which I had a right to expect from them ?

III. POINT.

In this day the books of conscience will be opened. "I will reprove thee," will the Lord say, "and I will set (these things) before thy face" (Ps. XLIX, 21). Each one will then be judged according to the testimony of his own conscience, without being able to dissemble or conceal anything from his Judge, from whose all-seeing eyes nothing can escape; the clear-sighted Judge penetrates the inmost recesses of hearts: He will reveal their secrets and will render to every man according to his works (Eccl. XVI, 13). Alas! "If the just man shall scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Peter IV, 18.) "O Lord, enter not into judgment with Thy servant" (Ps. CXLII, 2), examine not my ingratitude, and remember that I am the cause of the great journey which Thou didst make from the highest heavens even to the earth here below; destroy me not in the last day, judge me not in the severity of Thy justice; for "if Thou, O Lord, dost mark our iniquities, who shall stand" before Thee? (Ps. CXXIX, 3.) Woe to me, because I have sinned much in my life, but what shall I do, wretch that I am, and whither shall I fly, save to Thee, O merciful Father? Yes, my God, I will go with confidence from Thy irritated justice to Thy goodness, appeased by the Word made flesh, and, trusting in this confidence, I shall not be confounded.

Monday after the First Sunday of Advent.

God chastises us in this world to enable us to avoid eternal punishment.

I. POINT.

“There shall be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars” (Luke XXI, 25).

These signs shall precede the last judgment to warn men to prepare for it. God orders all things for the salvation and profit of the elect; for them He changes obstacles into means; and thus the passing tribulations of this life become, through His mercy, salutary warnings to protect them from the scourges of His justice, and to enable them to merit His ineffable rewards, according to the words of the prophet: “Thou hast given a warning to them that fear Thee, that they may flee from before the bow,” that is, before Thine anger, justly irritated by sin, and “that Thy beloved may be delivered” (Ps. LIX, 6).

II. POINT.

God smites us now, as a father, to arouse us from the mortal lethargy in which we are buried, that, being deeply moved by the apprehension of His judgment, we may forestall its severity by a true repentance and an humble confession of His mercies and our miseries, of His goodness and our malice. Let us acknowledge, then, with the young men in the fiery furnace, that He punishes us justly, because we have sinned; that we have fallen into iniquity by straying away from Him, by violating His commandments and His laws (Dan. III, 29, 30). Let us exclaim with holy Job: Truly I have offended God, and I have not been chastised as I deserved; finally, let us say with Daniel: “I will confess against myself my injustice to the Lord, and Thou, O my God, wilt forgive the wickedness of my sin” (Ps. XXXI, 5).

III. POINT.

“God wills not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live” (Ezech. XVIII, 32, and XXXIII, 11). Therefore, O Lord, Thou wilt instruct him by affliction, says Isaias, that he may return to Thee and seek Thee (Is. XXVI, 14, 16), for Thou dost allow Thyself to be found by him that seeks Thee (Wis. VI, 13), provided he does so with all his heart and in all the bitterness and sorrow of his soul. Receive us, then, contrite and humbled; let our sacrifice be consumed this day before Thee, and may it be pleasing in Thy sight; try us, O God, as we have merited, but by salutary chastisements, and do not condemn us. Cut, strike, burn; spare us not in this life, provided Thou dost spare us in the next; may affliction give us understanding, may it produce in us worthy fruits of penance, which, according to the promise of Thy holy precursor, will protect us from the wrath to come (Luke III, 8), that, at the last day, we may appear with confidence before Thee.

Tuesday after the First Sunday of Advent.

Christians ought to desire Christ's last Advent.

I. POINT.

“When these things begin to come to pass, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is at hand”

(Luke XXI, 25).

What joy, what consolation for the just to see, in the glory of His majesty, Jesus Christ, whom they have followed and loved in the humility of His flesh; to see Him as the Supreme Judge of those who had unjustly condemned Him; to contemplate with their eyes His sacred humanity, the precious ark of our salvation (Ps. CXXXI, 8), His adorable body, His life-giving wounds,

whence will flow unceasingly, as from an inexhaustible source of love, the balm of heavenly sweetness. What a happiness, above all, to know with certainty that they will be forever inseparably united to their Beloved! O ye heavens, we shall see in our flesh (Job XIX, 27), and with our own eyes Jesus, our God and our Saviour! That sweet and delicious hope which consoled the patience of Job, and which he preserved in his heart, can sustain us also in the trials of this life.

II. POINT.

Jesus, called "the desire of the everlasting hills" (Gen. XLIX, 26), should be the constant object of our desires; we ought to love His last coming (2 Tim. IV, 8); we should ask for it often with the saints, because on that day He will place all things directly under His power; He will overcome all His enemies and will rule over them. On that day also the glory and the beatitude of the saints will be perfect, because their bodies will rise again, and "death will be swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. XV, 54). The soul and body, which had been separated for a time, will be re-united to enjoy together the possession of God, and to bless and praise Him eternally. Lift up your hearts and rejoice on this day (Matt. V, 12). O Lord, may this blessed day not tarry, may Thy kingdom come! Come, Lord Jesus (Apoc. XXII, 20), live and reign in us forever.

III. POINT.

Since Jesus is our sovereign Good, our only happiness consists in being united to Him; and since it is our greatest and an inconceivable misfortune to be separated from Him, we ought, then, to desire the former as much as we should fear the latter. We ought, above all things, to avoid offending so good a God, and constantly

endeavor to please Him; we ought to tremble at the very approach or shadow of sin, which alone can cause us to lose Him. This fear is not only for sinners, but for the just also, as long as they are upon earth. "Fear the Lord, all ye that are His saints," said David (Ps. XXXIII, 10); for, adds Job, even the pillars of heaven tremble and shudder before Him (Job XXVI, 11). We should also attach ourselves to Him in this life with a faithful and constant love, if we wish to possess Him forever in eternity; since, according to the saying of the apostle, "There is now, therefore, no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not according to the flesh" (Rom. VIII, 1).

Wednesday after the First Sunday of Advent.

The signs preceding the last judgment.

I. POINT.

"There shall be great and dreadful calamities"

(Luke XXI, 25).

Ah! who will not tremble, says St. Jerome, who will not shudder at the sight of the mighty waves of the furious sea rising above the highest mountains, and revealing its monsters and abysses? Who will not be filled with terror at the sight of the universal disturbance of all nature, — the stars darkened and falling from heaven; earthquakes overthrowing the most solid edifices and reducing them to dust; the wild beasts issuing from their dens, with fearful cries and horrible roarings; the tombs opening and casting forth their dead; all men, then living, dying instantaneously; and, finally, the universal conflagration, which will reduce the most flourishing kingdoms to ashes and will consume the heavens and the earth. Fire, as an instrument of the avenging justice of God, will precede His

coming, says the prophet, and will burn His enemies: "A fire shall go before Him, and shall burn His enemies round about" (Ps. XCVI, 3). O sinners, who will not be moved by the salutary fear of God in this life, you will then furiously tear one another to pieces, and, full of despair and terror, you will cry out to the mountains and rocks: "Fall upon us and hide us from the face of Him, that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb" (Apoc. VI, 16).

II. POINT.

Frightful signs shall appear in all creatures, that the guilty may be chastised by all things which they have abused, in order to do evil (Wisdom XI, 17). God will arm His creatures, says the Wise Man, to revenge Himself upon His enemies, and "the whole world shall fight for Him against the unwise" (Wis. V, 21). The heavens and the earth, with all they contain, will rise up against sinners, to avenge the injuries done to their common Lord; such is the meaning of the words of St. Paul: "For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him that made it subject, in hope: because the creature also itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption," to participate "in the liberty of the glory of the children of God" (Rom. VIII, 21), that is, that the sinner, being unworthy that the earth should bear him, that the sun should give him light, and that other creatures should serve him, will see all these creatures that are now, in spite of themselves, subject to his vanity, suddenly freed from their bondage by the power of Him, who made them for the use of man, and, henceforth ceasing to obey iniquity, they will become the instruments of the chastisement which iniquity merits.

III. POINT.

The sinner ought in this life to accept freely that which he will one day necessarily endure; he ought to confess that, having abused and degraded himself by his evil deeds, having ceased to be what man ought to be, he deserves to be deprived of all his rights and of the use of things which, made for man innocent, serve him, when a sinner, only with regret and by constraint; for if God abandoned them to their natural instinct, they would unite together to destroy and annihilate him. If, then, men arm themselves against him, if they take his possessions from him by their injustice, his honor by their calumnies, his tranquillity by their persecutions; if the elements and irrational creatures inconvenience him, if disease torments him, if his friends abandon him, if the devils tempt him and annoy him, if, in short, all things are opposed to him; and if God Himself seems to forsake him, he should acknowledge that he is still better treated than he deserves, and should say humbly with the prophet: "I will bear the wrath of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him" (Mich. VII, 9); and with David: Let them alone, it is God who has commanded them to afflict me; perhaps, seeing my humiliation and the trials I endure, He will pardon my sins (2 Kings XVI, 12).

Thursday after the First Sunday of Advent.

Judgment-day will end the exile of the just.

I. POINT.

"The hour is come to rise from sleep" (Rom. XIII, 11).

Therefore the Church causes the sound of the trumpet, which will summon all men to the general judgment, to resound in the ears of her children: it is to induce them to avoid the severity of the decisive and

irrevocable final sentence, that she invites them to penance and to amend their life, urges them to remember their last end (Eccli. VII, 40), excites them to salutary fear, endeavors to rouse them from the dangerous apathy into which the fatal enchantment of sin plunges them, and places before their eyes the counsel of Incarnate Wisdom: "Watch ye, therefore, because you know not what hour your Lord will come. . . . Be you ready, because at what hour you know not, the Son of man will come" (Matt. XXIV, 44).

II. POINT.

The night is spent, "the day is at hand" (Rom. XIII, 12). Jesus, our light, shines upon us: His truth which succeeds the shadows and figures of the Old Law, comes to instruct and enlighten us. Let us, then, lay aside the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light. Our salvation is nearer than when we received the faith. I will come soon, saith the Lord, and I will bring My recompense with Me to render to each one according to his works (Apoc. XXII, 12). They who were just under the Old Law, groaned in the prison of Limbo, and they languished during many ages, waiting for their deliverer: the deliverer has at length come, He has liberated His captives, He has severed their bonds, He has broken the gates of hell (Ps. CVI, 16), He has opened the doors of the sanctuary, He has made the entrance free (Heb. X, 20); and it depends only on us to enter. Let us hasten, let us endeavor to find repose (Heb. IV, 11), let us go to meet Jesus Christ, by the ardor of our desires and the abundance of our good works.

III. POINT.

"Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences" (Rom.

XIII, 14). Man had gone astray, following his inordinate desires, and seeking himself. Jesus Christ came to set him aright and to lead him back to the right way. He made Himself visible to our eyes, that we might be able more easily to model our conduct on His. Walk as Jesus Christ walked (1 John II, 6); have the same sentiments as He had (Phil. II, 5). It is principally in holy Communion, that Jesus comes to us to clothe us with Himself; in giving us His most pure body, He communicates to us His spirit, His inclinations, His maxims. O Jesus, clothe me with Thy holy virtues and Thy divine merits; be the soul of my soul and the source of all my actions; may I imitate Thee as my perfect model, and may I live henceforth for Thee alone!

Friday after the First Sunday of Advent.

The cross of Christ will judge both the just and sinners.

I. POINT.

“The sign of the Son of man shall appear in heaven”

(Matt. XXIV, 30).

The sun shall be darkened, says St. Chrysostom: but the triumphant cross of Jesus Christ will shine with a brilliant light, and convince all the nations of the earth, the just and the sinners, of the sovereign justice, of the infinite goodness and perfect holiness of God. Of His justice, by the punishment of sin; for the cross will bear testimony against the wicked, and they will see the sentence of their irrevocable condemnation engraved upon this sacred wood, which had been offered to them as a plank of salvation, to enable them to escape shipwreck. But they despised and rejected this assistance: they were deaf to the voice of the cross, offering them salvation; they were unwilling to share the afflic-

tions of the just (Ps. LXXII, 5); they reposed in the abundance of their riches, they founded their happiness in them, and forgot God. Behold the time of their joy has passed; their pleasures have been changed into bitterness, "and all their glory has gone down into hell" (Is. V, 14), that place of horror where each one will be tormented by the very things that were the instruments of his guilt (Wis. XI, 5).

II. POINT.

The justice of God will appear no less in favor of the just, and His goodness to them will reveal itself in a wonderful manner: in proportion to the tribulations which they endured, they will be filled with consolation, peace and delight, and in the general consternation of the universe, at the sight of the cross which they embraced and followed courageously, their confidence will not waver; they will repose in its shadow, and it will protect them from the wrath of the great Judge, who will say to them these loving words: You, who have shared My persecutions and My sufferings (Luke XXII, 28), come and share My kingdom, "enter into the joy of the Lord" (Mat. XXV, 21). Then will be fully accomplished this saying of the Gospel: You shall weep, and the world shall rejoice; but your sadness shall be changed into joy, "and your joy no man shall take from you" (John XVI, 22).

III. POINT.

The holiness of God will also shine forth in the day of the triumph of the cross. This sacred sign will manifest the infinite aversion and the irreconcilable hatred of God for sin; there we shall see that to destroy sin, He delivered His own Son to the most ignominious death; that in this beloved, sinless Son He punished with the utmost severity the mere likeness of sin, which

He bore in His flesh; that He immolated that most sacred body, devoting it to the most excruciating torments, to expiate the sins of men with which it was loaded; for Jesus Christ delivered Himself for us, and by His bruises we are healed (Is. LIII, 5). O Lord, who didst reconcile the world with Thy Father, who didst by Thy cross break the wall of partition (Ephes. II, 14) between Him and us, who didst love us and wash us in Thy blood (Apoc. I, 5), save us, have pity on us, since it was for us that Thou didst shed Thy most precious blood. Be mindful of Thy past mercies; place Thy cross and Thy Passion between Thine anger and my misdeeds. I salute thee, O holy Cross, my only hope! I appeal to thee from all the severity of the divine justice which my sins have merited.

Saturday after the First Sunday of Advent.

The sentence passed on sinners will be irrevocable; let us avoid it by a prompt conversion.

I. POINT.

“They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with great power and glory” (Mark XIII, 26).

There will be nothing so terrible and formidable to the wicked, as to behold the glorious countenance of the angry Judge, whom they fastened to the cross. “They shall look”, says the Scripture, “on Him whom they pierced” (John XIX, 37). Ah! Who will be able even to think of His coming (Mal. III, 2), or who shall bear the sight? Who would not wish then, like Job, to hide himself until His fury had passed? (Job XIV, 13.) Behold it will be impossible to flee from Him and to avoid Him: all eyes will be compelled to behold Him: what an appalling sight for sinners!

II. POINT.

The sinner will see this Lord: so lovable, so meek, but for him so severe, so awful; he will behold Him, he will groan, he will weep, he will shudder, but it will be too late; for all his desires shall perish: he will wish to amend, but he shall no longer be able to accomplish his wish. The time of penance and good works shall never return; and nothing will remain to him but the keenest remorse and the most overwhelming despair. He will curse his fatal birth, his sinful life, and his unhappy end; he will weep over his past blindness, his present rage, and his future torments. Let us, then, hasten to do good while we still have time; let us walk, according to the counsel of our Lord, while we have the light, lest the darkness should overtake us (John XII, 35).

III. POINT.

Sinners thus forsaken will receive no assistance from anyone. If they look up to heaven, they will see the sword of divine justice suspended over their heads; if they cast their eyes down, they will perceive the chasm of the dreadful abyss, yawning under their feet. On one side, the angels will say to them: Your pride has precipitated you into hell (Is. XIV, 11); on the other, the saints will say: These are they who did not put their confidence in God, but in themselves and in their riches (Ps. LI, 9). Jesus, the sovereign Judge, will reproach them: You thought, sinners, that I would be like unto you; but you are convicted by your very selves, and by your own evil deeds (Ps. XLIX, 21); depart from Me forever. Thus these miserable creatures, rejected by God, by the Blessed Virgin, by the angels, and the saints, will be precipitated into the frightful dungeon of their eternal abode. O good Jesus,

“Cast us not away from Thy presence” (Ps. L, 13); permit us not to be forever separated from Thee. Holy Mary, receive us into thy arms, and change not thy mercy into indignation. Ye angels and saints, assist us, help us, pray for us before that dreadful day.

Second Sunday of Advent.

Only a God-man could adequately expiate sin.

I. POINT.

“Art thou He that is to come?” (Mat. XI, 3).

Not all creatures together, neither angels, nor cherubim, nor seraphim, could fully satisfy the rigor of divine justice for a single sin. The brother shall not redeem his brother, says David (Ps. XLVIII, 8); man shall not redeem man. The offence is measured by the dignity of the person offended, and the satisfaction is according to the quality of him who satisfies. Sin committed against God, who is infinitely great and powerful, cannot then be compensated by the satisfaction of the creature, — so weak and insignificant. Sin is the debt of ten thousand talents; it is an infinite debt; it cannot be redeemed by the finite and limited possessions of creatures entirely insolvent in themselves; for they have not wherewith to pay, as the divine Master assures us (Mat. XVIII, 25). O Lord, “I am needy and poor” (Ps. LXIX, 6); I am a creature who sees and knows his poverty (Lament. III, 1); come, O my God, to my aid and enrich me with Thy gifts.

II. POINT.

Sin is the privation of an infinite good, because it destroys what is supernatural in the soul, — divine grace; and if God could suffer any wrong in His essence, any diminution in His greatness, or any loss in His

possessions, it would be by sin alone; for the sinner, as far as it is in his power, seeks to destroy the power, the wisdom, the goodness and the other perfections of God; therefore, sin can be repaired and effaced only by actions and sufferings, by a glory and a homage infinite in merit and value. This made Saint Augustine say, and his opinion is followed by theologians, that it is not lawful to commit a single sin for the preservation of the universe, not even for the conversion of all men, or for all the goods of nature and grace. O sinner, what then are you doing? An evil which all created nature can not repair. And what are you undoing? A good which all created nature cannot restore. O sin, worthy to be abhorred above all evils, for thou attackest God, who is great and amiable above all!

III. POINT.

Man, incapable of himself of repairing his misfortune, would infallibly be lost, if he had not found a resource in the ineffable mercy of his Lord. Therefore the sovereign Lord Himself would come, and we could hope for no one else. God, as God, could not suffer, and man alone could not satisfy: the one had not the infirmity to be subject to death, the other had not the dignity to merit; the one could do all and owed nothing, the other owed all and could do nothing; but Divine Wisdom invented the means to unite together, by the sacred union of the divine with the human nature, of power with duty, of dignity with weakness, in the Incarnation. "The Word was made flesh" (John I, 14); He became the price of our ransom, our riches, our treasure, our justice, our wisdom and our redemption (Jer. XXXIII, 9); by Him, and with Him, we can discharge all our debts. O Jesus, it is Thou who wast to come, and we do not expect any other; it is **Thou**

who wast promised by the Father, predicted by the prophets, and expected under the law. Thou art its beginning and its fulness, and Thou art called by the apostle "the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. XII, 2). The ancients had light only in Thy shadows, truth only in Thy figures, grace only in Thy expectation. If then their desires for Christ, although He was to come only long after, were so ardent, their petitions so continual, what should be our sentiments of devotion, of love, of reverence, of gratitude towards the amiable Saviour already come, who permits us to receive and possess Him, who is truly present to us in the Blessed Sacrament, and who enriches us with His spirit and His grace!

Monday after the Second Sunday of Advent.

A Christian must sustain his faith more by works than by words.

I. POINT.

"Go and tell John what you have seen: The blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the dead are raised to life, to the poor the Gospel is preached" (Mat. XI, 5).

"Jesus began to do, and (then) to teach" (Acts I, 1). He taught nothing by His words which He had not shown by His example, and in doing He taught: for all His actions were for our instruction. He is the great Jesus of Nazareth, "mighty in works and in words" (Luke XXIV, 19), and, as His words are spirit and life (John I, 14), His works also are holy, sanctifying, and the source of spirit and life in souls. O Jesus, imprint in us by the virtue of Thy spirit, what Thou dost express by Thy words: renew Thy miracles, enlighten sinners, open and penetrate their hearts, raise them from the death of sin to the life of grace: these are the fruits of Thy coming upon earth, of which we beseech Thee to render us partakers.

II. POINT.

“Go, tell John what you have seen” (Luke VII, 22). Jesus always proved His mission by His works: “If I do not the works of My Father,” said He, “believe Me not. But if I do, though you will not believe Me, believe the works” (John X, 38). The martyrs gloried before monarchs in being Christians; but they could do it much better by the voice of their blood, by their constancy in persecution, by their joy and patience in the midst of tortures. All the saints have had a faith living and active by charity; for “faith without works is dead” (James II, 20). Woe to us, if we are Christians only in name. To be true Christians, we must think, speak, act and suffer as Jesus Christ thought, spoke, acted and suffered; we must have the same sentiments, hold the same maxims, and show ourselves His disciples, living as He lived, despising what He despised, esteeming what He esteemed, loving and choosing what He loved and chose. Let us show ourselves in all things servants of God, by great patience in afflictions and adversities (2 Cor. VI, 4), in labors, watchings and fastings; by meekness, by the power of the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, that the “life of Jesus Christ may be made manifest in our bodies (2 Cor. IV, 10), as in St. Paul, who said: “I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Gal. II, 20).

III. POINT.

“Go, tell John what you have seen.” God, according to the words of the Holy Ghost, has charged each one of us with the care of his neighbor (Eccli. XVII, 12). We are all obliged to labor mutually for the salvation of one another; we are all reciprocally indebted to one another for good example and edifica-

tion; we ought to be the "good odor of Christ" (2 Cor. II, 15), and, by a holy and exemplary life, excite one another to serve and love Him. No one is exempt from this duty; it is within the reach of all. "Let your light so shine before men," said our Lord, "that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Mat. V, 16); for, adds He elsewhere, woe to him, who "shall scandalize one of these little ones who believe in Me, it were better for him that . . . he be drowned in the depth of the sea" (Mat. XVIII, 6). This thought made the prophet tremble when he exclaimed: "Cleanse me, O Lord, from my secret faults" (Ps. XVIII, 13); pardon me those faults which I have committed in others (Ps. XVIII, 13). Let us, then, so live that we may be able, with confidence, and without blushing for our life, to repeat after our Divine Model: Go and tell, not only what you have heard, but also what you have seen; or else with St. Paul: "Be ye imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (1 Cor. IV, 16).

Tuesday after the Second Sunday of Advent.

God, though He did not spare the rebel angels, showed mercy to men.

I. POINT.

God does nothing in time, which He has not foreseen and ordained from eternity; and all that exists, has been created according to the divine and eternal ideas, which are in Him as models, according to which all things have been formed. Being self-sufficient, and infinitely happy in the enjoyment of His divine perfections, He has drawn all His creatures from nothing, not through necessity or from indigence, but by the good pleasure of His will, and by the fecundity and profusion of His immense goodness, which delights to pour itself forth and communicate itself. He preserves them by

the single motive of His infinite goodness; but among all the creatures to which He gave being, He formed two capable of knowing Him, of loving and enjoying Him: the angel in heaven and man upon earth. He imprinted His image upon both; He destined them for a supernatural end, — to eternal life and the possession of Himself in His glory. O excellence of our condition, to be able to know, to love and to serve God, to know and to do His holy will. O exalted end of our creation, which is no other than God Himself, to be seen, loved and possessed in His essence and in all His greatness!

II. POINT.

Angels and men were created in a state of grace and innocence, and enriched with the supernatural gifts suitable to their end; but both lost these gifts by sin, revolting against the supreme authority of their Creator. God did not pardon the angels; He chose to exercise upon them His most severe justice, and for a single sin He hurled them into the depth of the abyss, where they will be tormented forever (2 Pet. II, 4). But it pleased Him to show the riches and magnificence of His mercy (Ephes. II, 7) and goodness to sinful men; for He remembered that we are but dust (Ps. CII, 14). Inspired by His charity and pure love alone, He resolved in His eternal council, to extricate man from perdition, to deliver him and save him by His infinite clemency, restoring by His grace to His guilty creature more than what he had lost by his fault. O eternal council of God, adorable and lovable! Ah! who am I, so unworthy and so devoid of merit, that Thou shouldst have deigned, O Lord, even before I existed, to “prevent me with the benedictions of Thy sweetness”! Thou didst look upon me and love me, as Thou sayest by Thy prophet: With **an** everlasting love, therefore, Thou hast drawn me

(Jer. XXXI, 13), having pity on me, O eternal Love, Source of our hope, Source of all our good, and first Cause of our salvation!

III. POINT.

It belongs only to God, to draw from the greatest of evils,—the sin of Adam, the greatest of goods,—the advent of His Son into the world. Since God created man for Himself alone, He made all inferior things for the use of man, and, with this intention, He subjected them to him (Ps. VIII, 8). They never cease to invite man and to aid him to tend to this blessed end; therefore he has as many means to rise towards God, as many ways to reach heaven, as there are creatures in the world. It was not enough for the infinite goodness of the Lord, to give us and to destine for our use, all the works of his hands, He wished, moreover, to give Himself, by becoming man and employing His whole life for our salvation. Therefore He became man, and to save us, He bowed the heavens and came down from the throne of His glory (Ps. XVII, 10) even to our misery; He clothed Himself with our infirmity, to come to seek and lead back to Himself, our erring souls. O truly exceeding charity, as the apostle expresses it (Ephes. II, 4), by which He loved us and gave Himself for us! O God, equally good and powerful, who hast so superabundantly repaired our ruin! How justly does Thy Church, animated with a holy transport, exclaim: Happy fault, that has procured for us such and so great a Redeemer!

Wednesday after the Second Sunday of Advent.

Only a corrupt will separates man from God.

I. POINT.

St. John, who had heard in prison, of the works of Jesus Christ, sent two of his disciples to ask Him: "Art

Thou He who art to come, or look we for another?" (Mat. XI, 3). John the Baptist, oppressed, unjustly persecuted, remains invincible in his justice; confined in a prison, he does not cease to exercise the duties of his ministry. His body is captive, but his soul is free; he is loaded with chains, but victorious in his bonds, and always the precursor of the Truth, he freely announces Jesus Christ, and shows, according to the expression of St. Paul, that the "word of God is not bound" (2 Tim. II, 9). Thus, after the example of St. John, we should never cease, whatever event or adversity may occur, to labor constantly at the work of our salvation, the only affair that we have here below. We must faithfully "sow in tears", if we wish to "reap in joy" (Ps. CXXV, 5), and not lose courage in the fire of tribulation, lest it burn us without purifying us. Let us strengthen our hearts, let us wait, and bear what comes to us from the Lord, since He tries us and chastises us only to awaken our faith, to animate our hope, and to render us worthy to be numbered among His children.

II. POINT.

God made man free; "He set before him life and death, good and evil" (Eccli. XV, 18). His liberty may never be violated; his will cannot be forced; it may be agitated by the waves of temptation, but it can be submerged only by its own cowardice, by its own weakness; it may be assailed by the world, but it is never vanquished, except by its own malice. The devil, like a chained dog, barks with rage, but he can bite and wound only those who approach him voluntarily. Our feet, our hands and our head may be bound, our senses deceived, our appetites excited; but all creatures combined cannot compel our will to commit a single mortal

sin, nor even a venial sin, if it does not freely consent. In like manner, no one can restrain the will, if it desires to sin; for his free-will is a sovereign right which man enjoys with regard to himself and his interior actions: God Himself respects the freedom with which He has endowed it, and will never violate it.

III. POINT.

It is a true consolation in the greatest anguish, to know that we cannot be separated from God, nor deprived of charity, except by our own will; that all the waters of tribulation cannot quench in us the flames of holy love (Cant. VIII, 7), and that we can say boldly and without temerity, with the apostle: "Who then shall separate us from the love of Jesus Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or persecution, or the sword?" (Rom. VIII, 35). In the midst of all these evils, we may remain conquerors through Him, who has loved us. "I am then certain that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor any creature, shall ever separate me from the charity of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (Rom. VIII, 38).

Thursday after the Second Sunday of Advent.

In the Eucharist, Christ is the happiness of the just, and justifies penitent sinners.

I. POINT.

"Art Thou He that art to come?" (Mat. XI, 3.)

Jesus, in His three advents, is He that was to come, and we do not look for another. He gave Himself to all in general, by His Incarnation, and He gives Himself to each one individually, in the Sacrament of His Body.

At His first coming, He became man like ourselves; in the second, He makes us one same flesh and one same spirit with Him: In the first, He descended even to our misery; by the second, uniting Himself to us, He raises us to Himself and enriches us with His treasures. He bound Himself to us in the first, by clothing Himself with our nature; in the second, He unites Himself to us by bonds of love and charity; but in the third, He will come as the Sovereign Judge, to decide the eternal destiny of all men. O Jesus, Thou art in Thy first coming, our only Saviour; in the second, our treasure and our life; in the third, Thou wilt be our "exceeding great reward" (Gen. XV, 1), and the crown of Thy saints; Thou wilt be our perfect felicity, and we do not expect any other; for Thou wilt beatify our souls by the unobstructed vision of Thy divinity, and our bodies by the presence of Thy holy humanity. Ah! when will this happiness, this crowning blessing, come to us!

II. POINT.

"Art Thou He that art to come?" Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, does not disdain to give Himself to sinful man, because to Him alone, it belongs to justify man; it is He, who "from stones can raise up children to Abraham" (Luke III, 8). Who, asks the holy man Job, can render pure and innocent, that which is drawn from an impure and corrupt seed? (Job XIV, 4.) Thou alone, O Lord. Thou didst converse and eat with sinners during Thy mortal life, and Thou dost not disdain, in the midst of Thy glory, to feed them with Thyself, because, being unable to participate in their stains, Thou canst, and Thou wilt to communicate to them Thy purity. Thou didst say: "They that are whole, need not a physician, but they that are sick"

(Mat. IX, 12). And there went forth from Thy person "a virtue which healed all" (Luke VI, 19). Come, then, whoever you may be, hasten to your deliverer: if you are blind, He is the light; if you are weak, He is strength itself; if you are in error, He is the truth; if you are ignorant, He is supreme wisdom; if you are languid and nearing death, He is the life and the salutary remedy for all your miseries. Go to Him, "all you who are weary and heavy-laden", and, according to His word, He "will refresh you" (Mat. XI, 28). O Jesus, Thou art the refuge and the salvation of sinners, and it is only by the virtue of Thy holy sacraments, that men cease to be sinners and become just. Come then, O Lord; Thee alone do we seek, and we do not expect any other.

III. POINT.

All the justice of the Old Law was contained in the faith and the expectation of the promised Saviour. All the justice of the New Law consists in the knowledge and love of the Saviour already come. He was the happiness of the just who saw Him, and with whom He conversed upon earth; and He is the felicity and the fulfilment of the desires of all the just, who groan in this vale of tears, and whose only consolation is to see Him with the eyes of faith, and to possess Him under the veils of His Sacrament; for if it is a source of justice wherein sinners are justified, it is an overflowing fountain of all good for the just; it is a fountain of love wherein they are purified more and more, and holily inflamed with the divine fire which He came to bring upon earth (Luke XII, 49). There, in anticipation, He wipes away the tears of the saints (Apoc. XXI, 4); He strengthens them in their labors, He inebriates them with the abundance of the goods of His house, He

quenches their thirst in the torrent of His sacred delights (Ps. XXXV, 9), and He makes them forget all their trials. Let them come, then, to “draw waters with joy from the fountains of the Saviour (Is. XII, 3), and let them exclaim: Thee only, O Lord, do we desire, and we do not expect any other. As the sparrow has found a house, and the turtle a nest for her little ones, so may Thy altars be my retreat, O my King and my God (Ps. LXXXIII, 4). “What have I in heaven, or what do I desire on earth, save Thee, the God of my heart, my portion and my inheritance forever” (Ps. LXXII, 26).

Friday after the Second Sunday of Advent.

Christ in Mary's womb, already begins to expiate our sins by humiliation and suffering.

I. POINT.

The Word being God and Almighty, glorious from all eternity, became by His Incarnation, a God annihilated, as it were, and humbled, a God dependent upon and dwelling in His creature. He first descended from His uncreated Person to a nature created and drawn from nothing; being a pure spirit, He united Himself to a substance, material and corporal. “And the Word was made flesh” (John I, 14); this is the first degree of His annihilation. The second fills the measure of His humiliation, for not only He became man and clothed Himself with the form of a slave; but He became man, passible and mortal, subjecting Himself to all human weaknesses and infirmities, which are inseparable from sin, and even to death itself. O stupendous descent of the Creator to the creature, of a God to nothing! He, who is the Eternal, began to exist! O masterpiece of divine charity! O Jesus, true God,

and, as man, the work of the hands of God! O Sovereign Creator of all things, reduced to the rank of creatures! God immortal, impassible, whom evil cannot approach, become a "man of sorrows, acquainted with infirmity" (Is. LIII, 3), how worthy Thou art of all our respect and all our love!

II. POINT.

Jesus begins to suffer as soon as He begins to live: the sovereign reason which He possesses, increases His sufferings; He sees Himself, immense as He is, confined in the narrow prison of the Virgin's womb: He, who comes to enlighten the world, dwells in profound obscurity; He knows that He will leave it only to offer Himself to greater sufferings. The first instant of His life is also the first instant of His passion: from that moment, He beholds all its most ignominious and cruel circumstances: the bonds, the whips, the thorns, the cross present themselves to Him; He sees them, He accepts them; and "joy being set before Him", as St. Paul says, He chooses and embraces the cross (Heb. XII, 2). He said to His Father, when entering the world: "Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldst not, but a body Thou hast fitted to Me: holocausts for sin did not please Thee. Then said I: behold I come: in the head of the book it is written of me: that I should do Thy will, O God" (Hebr. X, 5, 6, 7); I am resolved to do it, and Thy law is in the midst of my heart.

III. POINT.

Jesus Christ makes the womb of His mother a living temple, in which He offers Himself to God, His Father, for all the sins of the world. As He was from that time capable of meriting infinitely, He then began to expiate our sins, and to make efficacious satisfaction

for us to the divine justice: this is the morning sacrifice, in which He immolates Himself by the hands of His love,—an immolation which continued without interruption until the bloody sacrifice of the cross, which He was to offer in the evening of His life. O Lord, Thy ineffable charity cannot bear any delay; impatient to merit Thy graces for us, Thou art not a moment without suffering for us and laboring for our salvation. How great is our cowardice, our indifference, our sloth in corresponding with Thy zeal and Thy love! Why do we not blush to destine for Thee only the miserable remains of a life passed in sin and in forgetfulness of Thy benefits, or to become weary in the narrow way of penance, when we have scarcely taken the first step? Oh, too late have I begun to love Thee, Beauty ever ancient and ever new! Woe to the time when I did not love Thee! Happy he who, after Thy example, O Jesus, bears the yoke of the Lord from his youth (Lam. III, 27). Grant that the days that remain to me may be entirely consecrated to Thy service, and that there may not be a single moment of my life which will not be all Thine. Let us love Him, who first loved us (1 John IV, 19), and who has never ceased to give us tokens of His tenderness and love.

Saturday after the Second Sunday of Advent.

Christ in Mary's womb exalts and sanctifies her, and renders infinite homage to God.

I. POINT.

Jesus was for nine months hidden within Mary, as the sun in a cloud; therefore He is called "the hidden God" (Is. XLV, 15). He dwells in her in all the fullness of His greatness, and with the same glory with which "He is seated upon the cherubim" (Ps. LXXIX,

2), and adored by the angels in heaven. He dwells there in peaceful repose, as the Most High in the Tabernacle that He has sanctified (Ps. XLV, 5). He reigns there supremely as a King upon His throne; He is there as in His temple, and in a sacred oratory where He offers to His Father sacrifices of prayer and praise: in this sanctuary the divine Majesty is adored and served, in a manner singular and worthy of itself; there the soul of Jesus was, without interruption, occupied with the Divinity, and His Sacred Heart always poured forth, in an ineffable manner, continual acts of the love of God. Mary, in whom such great things were accomplished, is the "woman clothed with the sun" and surrounded with all its splendors (Apoc. XII, 1). Who then could be more illuminated than she, or even as much? Who could receive more abundantly its salutary influence? Mary is the precious Ark which bears the Propitiatory of our salvation. O glorious and all-powerful Mother, may all nations praise thee and prostrate themselves before thee, who dost contain in thy womb the Lord of glory, the Almighty, Him whom the heavens cannot contain, the King of immortal ages.

II. POINT.

Jesus dwelling in Mary, and not finding in her any obstacle to His divine operations, elevated her every day more and more, rendering her more and more pure, enlightening her, perfecting and sanctifying her. Mary, on the other hand, was profoundly recollected and absorbed in Jesus. All her senses, her mind, her will, and all her faculties were solely occupied with Him; she regarded Him as her all and the only object of her love and desires; for she lived more in Him and by Him than in herself and by herself; a singular and admirable sanctification in Mary which we ought to honor, an in-

terior and sacred recollection of her heart, which we ought to imitate. Let us adore Jesus in her during this holy time, and let us unite ourselves to Jesus Himself, dwelling in us by His grace, but above all in a more special and exalted manner by holy Communion. O Lord, said St. Augustine, I sought Thee outside of myself and in the multiplicity of creatures, and I found Thee not, because Thou wast within me, and more intimately than I am there myself. O my God, who dost preserve and sustain me, Thou who art in me by Thy essence and Thy power, dwell in me by Thy grace and love; grant that I may separate myself from all that is not Thou, to enjoy with Thy most holy Mother Thy sweet and divine presence.

III. POINT.

Mary had Jesus within her, as the source of her life and of all her movements. She bore her Son in her womb; but this all-powerful Son sustained and preserved His admirable Mother, who, perfectly submissive to His guidance and to all His designs, lived and acted not by herself, for Jesus acted in her and by her. How could she bear such a fire within her without being inflamed, and if they who are children of God act by the spirit of God (Rom. VIII, 14), how much more would she, who was His Mother, be animated with His divine spirit! Mary, being then filled with Jesus, with His spirit and His grace, and having acquired by her dignity the right to communicate Jesus, could not but share her treasure and give forth of her abundance. Who does not see, that as it was through her that Jesus filled St. John with the Holy Ghost and sanctified him before his birth (Luke I, 44), so also He makes use of her and of her efficacious intercession to produce in us similar effects; and, as it belongs only to God the Father to

give us His Son as God, it is an excellence and prerogative proper to Mary to give Him to us as man. Thus she honors and imitates the incomprehensible charity of the Father towards us. O holy Mother of God, give us a share in the treasure, of which thou art the depository, give us a Repairer, a Deliverer, a Saviour in giving us thy Son, and grant that, receiving Him from thee, we may also by thee give ourselves to Him without reserve.

Third Sunday of Advent.

Man's nothingness.

I. POINT.

"Who art Thou?" (John I, 19.)

The eye by which we see all things, cannot see itself; so it is with man: never is he so blind as in the knowledge of what he is, and of his own defects. Let each one, then, ask himself: "Who art thou?" St. John answers three times: "I am nothing." With him we should acknowledge our nothingness in three states. The first is that of nature. Who am I in my origin, but a pure nothing, from which I could be drawn only by the power of God? Am I not this same nothing in my life and in my progress? For, if God did not sustain me by His mercy, I should immediately return to my original nothingness, to which He can reduce me in an instant, by a breath or by turning away His countenance. David says: "If Thou turnest away Thy face, they (creatures) shall be troubled; Thou shalt take away Thy breath, and they shall fail, and shall return to their dust" (Ps. CIII, 29). "And what am I in my end, but a vile dust and the food of worms? What can I become, except the prey of hell, if the goodness of God does not deliver me? Thou hast delivered my soul

out of the lower hell" (Ps. LXXXV, 13). O my God, I acknowledge that I am nothing from my beginning to my end; that I am rather a nothing than a being; that all my substance is a nothing before Thee, and has no subsistence without Thee (Ps. XXXVIII, 6).

II. POINT.

In the second state, which is that of grace, what have we that we have not received, and if we have received it, why do we glory? (1 Cor. IV, 7). Who can boast of having anything of himself but malice, ignorance and darkness? If sin is the privation of grace, and consequently a negation, ought I not to say with the prophet, that in sinning I have been reduced to nothing, and I knew it not? (Ps. LXXII, 22). I have even descended below nothing, since he who sins becomes the slave of sin, and the servant or slave is inferior to his master. O my God, I acknowledge and confess that without Thy love I am less than nothing; for I cannot have the least spark of Thy charity, unless it is a gift of Thy liberality. I have nothing good, which is not a token of Thy beneficence, an effect and an effusion of Thy great mercy delighting to bestow graces upon the most unworthy. Not to me, then, but to Thy holy Name be honor, praise and glory throughout all ages (Ps. LXV, 2).

III. POINT.

The third state is that of glory. A thousand times, O Lord, I have lost all my claims to it, and I am of myself absolutely incapable of meriting it. I can do nothing to acquire it, I have nothing wherewith to purchase it; for all the labors and sufferings with which men will be tried till the day of judgment, bear no proportion to the least degree of grace or glory. In fact,

according to the doctrine of St. Paul, all the evils of this life cannot be compared with the glory that is prepared for us in the next (Rom. VIII, 18). This inestimable pearl of the Gospel (Mat. XIII, 46) will be always a purely gratuitous gift to man, even though he should have given to purchase it all that he has, and all that he is. He, then, who thinks himself to be something, deceives himself, because he is nothing (Gal. VI, 3), he errs; but he who humbles himself, who acknowledges his nothingness, his indigence and his lowliness, begins to see the light of truth and to raise himself heavenward; for God, who is the sovereign Truth, loves the humble and detests the proud (Ps. CXXXVII, 6); He withdraws from the latter, and looks upon the former with a loving and protecting eye. Upon whom shall My spirit rest, upon whom shall I cast My eyes, He asks, if not upon him who is humble and contrite, and who trembles in his heart? (Isaias LXVI, 2).

Monday after the Third Sunday of Advent.

The presence of God produces holy joy in the soul.

I. POINT.

“Rejoice in the Lord” (Phil. IV, 4).

St. Paul wishes the Christian to be always cheerful. “The Lord”, says he elsewhere, “loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. IX, 7). All the prophets and patriarchs, inspired and animated by the same spirit, had spoken thus before him. Rejoice in God, all ye peoples of the earth, says David (Ps. LXV, 1); “Serve ye the Lord with gladness” (Ps. XCIX, 2); ye just rejoice in Him; delight in the Lord, all ye that are true of heart (Ps. XXXII, 1). Thou knowest, said the faithful Esther to God, that Thy servant has never rejoiced but in Thee.

alone (Esth. XIV, 18). I will exult with joy in God my Saviour (Hab. III, 18); and the Blessed Virgin exclaimed in the same terms: "My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour" (Luke I, 47). This holy delight, this pure joy, is the proper disposition of the just: "There is no peace for the wicked" (Is. XLVIII, 22); but the soul of the just is tranquil, it is as a perpetual feast (Prov. XV, 15); and God who loves justice, causes all things to concur to his advantage (Rom. VIII, 28). O Lord, continue to be upon earth the joy and the happiness of them, who do not expect anything but Thee only in time and in eternity.

II. POINT.

"Let your modesty be known to all men" (Phil. IV, 5). The apostle unites modesty and joy; and to give a reason for it, he adds: because the Lord is at hand; and again: "God is not far from each one of us" (Acts XVII, 27). I beheld the Lord always at my right hand, therefore I have not been moved, said David (Ps. XV, 8); and Job: Place me near Thee, O Lord, and let who will, come to combat me (Job XVII, 3). Since by the Incarnation God has become our Brother and the companion of our pilgrimage, His name is "Emmanuel", that is, "God with us" (Isaias VII, 14). "He was seen on earth, He conversed with men" (Bar. III, 38), "and dwelt among us" (John I, 14). Therefore, with more reason than the ancient just, we may repeat: that the Saviour is nigh. What sadness will not be dissipated by these tidings: "Behold thy King cometh" (Zach. IX, 9), and He comes to save thee; say to the cowardly: Take courage, and fear not; behold thy King comes, and He will save thee. This is certainly a just subject for joy, which is founded in God, and which cannot be disturbed by men. Jesus

Christ wishes us to preserve it, notwithstanding their calumnies and persecutions (Mat. V, 11); and, instructed by Him, St. Paul exclaims: We superabound with joy in tribulation, because it produces trial; trial, patience; and patience, hope which shall not be confounded (Rom. V, 5). Who can snatch from the just man the joy and tranquillity of his heart, says St. Augustine; will it be the labors and tears of penance? These are delicious tears. Will it be afflictions? The just man thinks only of the happiness that is to follow. Finally, will it be the apprehension of an inevitable death? Death opens to him the way to a better life, a life which will crown his desires, by making him enter into the joy of his Lord (Mat. XXV, 25).

III. POINT.

The joy of the just springs from an irreproachable conscience: it is one of the fruits of the Holy Ghost who produces it (Gal. V, 22), and who Himself sustains it in a pure heart. It has nothing in common with that worldly joy which leads to death, and which has been smitten with the divine malediction: "Woe to you that laugh" (Luke VI, 25). Holy joy is a source of life; it imparts a modest serenity to the countenance; it directs with perfect propriety, without affectation, the actions and the conduct; it generates patience, meekness and peace. The heart that possesses it, is satisfied in the midst of the greatest miseries, knowing that God, who is dearer to it than itself, is always happy and glorious; it is sustained by hope, for it rests upon the infallible promises of God, and already, by its firm confidence, it possesses the goods that it expects; it disdains those of earth, and uses them only with moderation and transitorily; it takes no part in vain pleasures, for they are only an illusion; because it contains a true satisfaction

that nothing can take from it. Joy is a production of divine love, and the soul that is possessed by it, rejoices only in the happiness of Him, whom it loves. But lest some accident should disturb this joy, St. Paul gives us this counsel: "Be not solicitous: but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known to God" (Phil. IV, 6). Before him David had said: "Rejoice in the Lord, and He will give thee all the desires of thy heart" (Ps. LVI, 4). What sweeter means to obtain all kinds of goods! O Lord, who is like unto Thee? Blessed are they who know how to rejoice in Thee (Ps. LXXXVIII, 16).

Tuesday after the Third Sunday of Advent.

Seek the glory of God in self-contempt.

I. POINT.

St. John declared expressly: "I am not Christ" (John I, 20). How great is the humility of this holy precursor! The honor of being considered the Messiah is offered to him, and he proclaims loudly that he is not the Messiah, that he is nothing, and that Jesus Christ is everything; he refers to Him all the glory that is offered to himself. The sinner, on the contrary, calls himself Christ, and makes himself God, when by a pride, as guilty as that of Lucifer, he attributes to himself what he has not, what he does not deserve, and refuses to God that which is His due, and, full of presumption, appropriates to himself the favors or the works of God, as if acquired or performed by his own industry and strength, adorning himself with the gifts of God, as if he had merited them, preferring himself to his neighbor, despising him, as formerly the pharisee despised the publican, and seeking a tribute of praise which belongs only to God, from whom we have re-

ceived everything. "I will not give My glory to another", says the Lord (Is. XLVIII, 11). One only has a right to it,—He of whom St. Paul teaches us, that, although He thought it no robbery to make Himself equal to God, yet "He emptied Himself" (Phil. II, 6). It is Thou, then, O Jesus, who alone art holy, who alone art the Lord, who alone art the Most High, with the Holy Ghost, in the glory of God the Father.

II. POINT.

From the two-fold knowledge of God and of himself, with which the holy precursor is filled, proceeds his ardent desire to establish the reign and the glory of Jesus Christ, even upon the ruins of his own. If he has disciples, it is only to teach them that there is but one Master, who is Jesus Christ (Mat. XXIII, 10), and to send them to follow Him; if he receives praise, he refers it to Him, and takes occasion from it to make known the infinite distance between Jesus and himself. It is true, he says, that He comes after me, but nevertheless He was before me (John I, 30). My baptism is only a preparation for His; "I am not worthy to loose the latchet of His shoes; He must increase, and I must decrease" (John III, 30): admirable words, which we ought to repeat with this great saint. He must increase, and I must decrease; may I die, provided He lives: may His love increase in me, and may my self-love decrease, may the old man perish and be destroyed; may the reign of the new man be established. O Jesus, may Thy divine life take every day new increase in my soul; reign there absolutely and forever.

III. POINT.

St. John, instructed not by the mouth of Jesus Christ, but by His spirit, speaks and acts like this divine Model; for Jesus Christ, although He is the Lord of

glory, yet attributes to His Father, with whom He is one same God, all the glory of the great wonders that He works. It is not I, says He, it is My Father, who is always with Me, who does all these things; "I seek not My own glory, but the glory of Him who sent Me" (John VIII, 50). He hath given Me all things. If the Man-God speaks in this manner; if, all-powerful as He is, He declares that He holds all from His Father; if He would do nothing for His own glory, shall sinful man be permitted selfishly to seek his own glory? If God humbles Himself, shall man dare to exalt himself? Let him learn, then, to abase himself, to attribute to himself only what belongs to him, that is, ignorance and sin; let all his presumption and vain-glory disappear, for it is written: All the glory of the sinner shall perish (Ps. XCI, 8). The sinners have flourished in the world, but they shall be exterminated forever. Let the sinner, by a voluntary confession, forestall the necessary and terrible humiliation which will punish pride; let him acknowledge alike the infinite greatness of God and his own impotence and excessive misery; let him enter into his nothingness, like the holy precursor, and say unceasingly with David: To Thy glory, my King and my God, I consecrate my works; Thy honor alone do I seek and desire.

Wednesday after the Third Sunday of Advent.

The union in Mary's womb of the Person of the Word with human nature.

I. POINT.

"The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a Virgin called Mary."
(Luke I, 26.)

Who is this happy Virgin, who receives a message from heaven? It is a simple maiden, poor, unknown,

retired, hidden in a little corner of the world. Although despised and forgotten by men, she was the treasure of earth; and alone among all creatures, and above all, she was especially regarded, loved and chosen by the Most Holy Trinity, as she herself proclaims: "He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid" (Luke I, 48). To this Virgin the angel Gabriel was sent by God; it was not to the courts of monarchs, nor to the wise of earth, but to the humble Mary, that the heavenly ambassador Gabriel came to reveal the highest of the mysteries. The word which he brings, is the announcement of that ineffable and eternal Word, of that divine Word, Jesus, the Angel of the great Council, by whom all things were made, and who was to take flesh from her; he comes to obtain her consent to associate her with God in the accomplishment of His greatest master-piece. O precious moment, which reveals to Mary the first tidings of the salvation of the world! A moment, at the remembrance of which our admiration and gratitude can only repeat the worthy thanksgivings of Jesus to His Father: I give Thee thanks, O Father, that Thou hast hidden Thy secrets from the wise of the world; "and hast revealed them to the little ones" (Mat. XI, 25). Therefore, O holy Mary, all nations shall call thee blessed (Luke I, 48).

II. POINT.

"Behold the handmaid of the Lord" (Luke I, 38). As soon as these words were pronounced, the Holy Ghost formed from the most pure blood of Mary a very perfect body, to which He united a soul, created from nothing, and the Divine Word appropriated to Himself this body and this soul, so that the Divine nature united itself to the human nature, in the person of the Word, and the Son of God became the Son of man, according

to the prediction of the angel to Mary: "The Holy that shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of the Most High" (Luke I, 35). Jesus, from this first moment, was perfect God and perfect Man, worthy of the adoration and highest veneration of angels and of men. Let all creatures, instructed by the revelation of the Heavenly Father made to St. Peter, render to Him homage, and exclaim: O Jesus, Son of Mary, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mat. XVI, 16), "who art come into this world" (John XI, 27); let us all proclaim with the firm faith of the Samaritans, that He is truly the Saviour (John IV, 42), and let us say to Him, in the earnest expression of our heart, like St. Thomas: Thou art "my Lord and my God" (John XX, 28), as adorable and as amiable in Thy abasement as in Thy ineffable greatness.

III. POINT.

The union of the divine Word with our flesh is not merely accidental, but substantial; and in an ineffable manner it is the source, the cause, the model of all the unions of grace and glory, which we have and shall have with God, in time and in eternity. It is their source, because they all proceed from it; their cause, because all are merited and given to us by it. "No one cometh to the Father but by Me," says our Lord (John XIV, 6). In fact, Jesus is our Mediator, who reconciles us with His Father (1 Tim. II, 5); He is "full of grace and truth", and "we all receive of His fulness" (John I, 16). The Man-God is finally our model, because we are all called to be conformable to Him, as He Himself, says the apostle, is the first image of God (Colos. I, 15); He is our Model, the Model that we must study and imitate, and by whom we can merit to become the adopted children of the heavenly Father, as He is Him-

self His real and only Son. O Jesus, may I behold Thee, may I adore Thee, may I love Thee, as the cause and first source of my salvation, as the Model whom I wish to imitate, and to whom I desire to unite myself inseparably, as the twig is united to its stem, and the ray to the sun.

Thursday after the Third Sunday of Advent.

The knowledge of God and of one's self.

I. POINT.

"One cometh after me, who was before me" (John I, 27).

St. John, by these words, bears a striking testimony to the Divinity of Jesus Christ, as Jesus Christ Himself did afterwards, when He said to the Jews: "Verily I say unto you: Before Abraham was, I am" (John VIII, 58). The beloved disciple reveals to us in his turn: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John I, 1). If we ask God: "Who art Thou, Lord?" — He will answer, "I am, who am" (Ex. III, 14); "I am the beginning and the end; He who is, who was, and who is to come, the Almighty God" (Apoc. I, 8). Know, says the prophet, that "the Lord is God; it is He, who hath made us, and not we ourselves" (Ps. XCIX, 3). There are three titles of greatness in Jesus, three subjects for our profound humiliation before Him: He is God in His essence, we ought to adore Him; He is our Creator by His power, we ought to submit to Him. "Shall not my soul be subject to God, since from Him is my salvation?" (LXI, 2). He is our sovereign Saviour; we ought to serve Him, and annihilate ourselves before His majesty. O Jesus, who art before all ages, I acknowledge Thee and I adore Thee in Thy greatness.



II. POINT.

I am not worthy to loose the latchet of His shoe (John I, 27). This is the humble acknowledgment and the true testimony of John the Baptist with regard to the Saviour. In proportion as the holy precursor is penetrated with the greatness of the Son of God, dazzled by the splendor of His holiness, moved by His profound annihilations, enlightened by this divine Sun of Justice, who veils Himself under the clouds of our humanity, he recognizes the abyss of his own nothingness, the excess of his unworthiness and his weakness; for among the saints, they who were favored with a clearer knowledge of God, were the most humble, and the most contemptible in their own eyes. As the presence of the sun's rays renders visible those imperceptible atoms which are not discovered in the shade, so the presence of God and the sight of His perfections, striking our mind and impressing upon it sentiments of reverence and adoration, at the same time unveil to us what we are, and plunge us into an abyss of annihilation before His majesty. What is more calculated to draw from our hearts these holy sighs of one of the most perfect lovers of our Lord, St. Augustine? "My God, grant that I may know Thee and that I may know myself: that I may know Thee, in order to love and esteem Thee; that I may know myself, in order to hate and despise myself; that I may know Thee, in order to seek and desire Thee; that I may know myself, in order to flee from myself, that I may unite myself to Thee more intimately and more perfectly.

III. POINT.

If St. John, who was great before the Lord, who was the greatest among the children of men, and of whom the world was not worthy, did not think himself

worthy to loose the latchet of the shoes of Jesus Christ, and if in this he renders exact justice to himself, what shall we, full of sins, so far from the holiness of John the Baptist, what shall we think of ourselves, and how shall we dare to appear in the presence of the Lord, before whom the pillars of heaven tremble, in whose eyes the angels are not without spot? (Job IV, 18). With what sentiments should we be penetrated, especially when He comes to us and in us by holy Communion! O Lord, who art Thou and who am I? Thou the Saint of saints, the Almighty, an abyss of infinite perfections; and I, a criminal nothing, a frightful combination of darkness, miseries, inconstancy and sin! If the Church is astonished that Thou didst not abhor to enter the womb of the purest of Virgins, how canst Thou descend into the heart of a sinner, unworthy of Thy mercies? Lord, I am filled with confusion, astonishment and gratitude! O admirable and incomprehensible prodigy! A poor and vile servant, nourished with the Body of his Master and Lord in holy Communion!

Friday after the Third Sunday of Advent.

The sanctification of souls and the effusion of the Holy Ghost.

The Visitation.

I. POINT.

"Mary rising in haste, went to the hill country."

(Luke I, 39.)

The visit of the Blessed Virgin to St. Elizabeth is full of mysteries. As the Incarnation established in Jesus a substantial grace and an uncreated holiness, the cause of all sanctification, so the Visitation contained the first effusions of this grace and the first outpouring of the holiness of Jesus. Ardently desiring to exercise

His office of Redeemer, He communicates His holy eagerness to His blessed Mother, and inspires her to cross the mountains in haste, to bear salvation to the house of her cousin. The Incarnation had been a mystery of silence and solitude; it had taken place in the seclusion of a virgin's womb, without any witness; but the Visitation is a mystery of communication. The silence is broken; Mary goes forth from her retreat; Jesus begins to make Himself known, and diffuses the first rays of His divine light. St. John, enlightened by this ineffable splendor, recognizes His Deliverer: he leaps for joy in the presence of His Lord; he receives the impressions of His love; he pays Him homage, and to Him he offers and consecrates his whole self. The two mothers speak with the lips, and the two children speak heart to heart. How powerful is the language of Jesus, and what great wonders does it not accomplish! O Jesus, "let Thy voice sound in my ears" (Cant II, 14), say to me that "Thou art my salvation" (Ps. LIV, 3). O powerful and sovereign word, which drew the world and all creatures from nothing, draw me from nothing and from the abyss of my sins; burst my bonds asunder, and form happier ones which will attach me to Thee forever.

II. POINT.

Each mystery of Jesus and Mary has its special grace. That which flows from the Visitation, as from a fruitful source, is the sanctification of souls and the fulness of the Holy Spirit; for St. John was sanctified and animated by this divine Spirit with Elizabeth and Zachary. This source was not dried up nor exhausted in its beginning and its first effects; this mystery is always sanctifying, and still produces the heavenly influences of the Holy Ghost. How many graces has it

not diffused, and will continue to diffuse until the end of the world! But if a single visit of Jesus accomplished such wonders, how is it that the many interior visits which we receive every day, benefit us so little? When He comes to us in person in holy Communion, He does more than when still confined in the womb of His Mother He visited St. John. Why is it that He does not sanctify us as He sanctified him? Why do not we become like him, filled and animated with the spirit of Jesus? Ah, it is because He finds obstacles to what He wishes to do in us, and we offer to Him only an indocile heart and a proud spirit. O Lord, act powerfully in my soul; destroy all that is opposed to Thee; root out all the plants which Thy heavenly Father did not sow; and may Thy visit sanctify me and guard my spirit!

III. POINT.

Jesus came to spread fire upon the earth, and what did He wish in the eagerness of His love, but that this fire should burn (Luke XII, 49), as He Himself declares. He enkindled this fire when He descended into Mary's virginal womb; and He caused it to burn first in her, and then in His precursor. The Word was made flesh by the Incarnation, and He began to dwell in us by the Visitation. He was corporally born in Mary in the first mystery, and by the second He was spiritually born in St. John. Mary received the infusion of the Word made flesh, and then she went to make its first outpouring; for Jesus must first be born in us, before He can be born of us: we must receive before we can give, and, after the example of Mary, we must possess in an eminent degree what we are to communicate to others. Happy is he who, like her, bears Jesus in himself always and everywhere; who pours Him forth and communi-

cates Him by the edifying example of a holy conversation; who, burning with His love, inspires, excites and inflames all hearts to love Him, like Mary, whose presence at the house of Elizabeth produced such great effects of grace and sanctification! O Blessed Virgin, Mother of God, deign to make us participate in thy holy love!

Saturday after the Third Sunday of Advent.

Christ's interior dispositions at the moment of the Incarnation.

I. POINT.

“The Word was made flesh” (John I, 14).

The first and most sublime intention of the divine Word, in becoming man, was to render to God a glory worthy of Him, a gratitude, a love, a worship and a homage in proportion to His greatness and supreme majesty; this He alone could do. This truth is founded upon the principle of faith, that the holy humanity of Jesus, being united to the divinity, has an infinite dignity, and therefore all His words, His actions and movements, both interior and exterior, all the moments of His most holy life rendered to God infinite honor; and, in fact, God was more glorified by a single one of His least actions, than by all the submission, the services and adorations of the angels and saints. Before this mystery God was always infinitely adorable, but He was not infinitely adored: the adoration, worthy of Him and due to Him, began only at the moment of the Incarnation. Then was seen a true God in adoration; and His adoration being of infinite value, merit and dignity, God was, consequently, supremely honored, perfectly loved and divinely served by Jesus Christ, our Lord: this is the principal effect of His Incarnation, and to it all the other mysteries refer. O precious mo-

ments and movements! O words, thoughts and actions of Jesus, which glorify God with a supreme worship, actions which we ought ourselves to adore, and to which we ought to unite ourselves forever!

II. POINT.

The soul of Jesus, created from nothing, and at the same instant united to the Word, returned towards God to the full extent, the full capacity of its being and of its powers, and produced eminent acts; or rather, it entered into an actual, uninterrupted disposition of perfect gratitude, of entire self-oblation, of a profound adoration and sovereign homage to the Deity. All the decrees and all the will of God in regard to the life and passion of Jesus for the salvation of the world, were then presented to this glorious soul, that accepted them and submitted to the full accomplishment of the good pleasure of His heavenly Father. Therefore, Jesus afterwards said: "I came down from Heaven, not to do My will, but the will of Him that sent Me" (John VI, 38). O Jesus, always obedient from the first moment till the last sigh of Thy life! Make us faithful and submissive to Thy holy laws and to all Thy designs over us. May we have no desires but to accomplish Thy will on earth as perfectly as is done in heaven (Mat. VI, 10), that, by imitating Thee, we may be able to glorify God in a manner worthy of Him by Thee, in Thee, and with Thee.

III. POINT.

Jesus, from His first moment, was consecrated by the unction of the divinity as Highpriest of the New Law, according to the testimony of His prophet, who thus addresses Him: "God, Thy God hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness" (Ps. XLIV, 8), above all those who share in Thy glory. This unction of

Jesus Christ is the source of the sacerdotal grace which flows from Him on His ministers. Jesus, in this character of Priest and Pontiff, began from that time to sacrifice and offer to God a living victim, holy and acceptable in His sight, a Victim which is no other than Himself in His mortal flesh; a Victim always present to the eyes of God. This made Jesus then say, what He afterwards repeated on the eve of His passion: I sanctify Myself, that is, I offer and immolate Myself for them. Whence the apostle concludes that in this will, by which He first offered Himself, we are sanctified in virtue of "the oblation of His Body once made" (Heb. X, 10). There is, then, no victim which can appease God, or which has the power to please Him, no sacrifice agreeable in His sight, unless it is united to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, or rather unless it forms a portion of that sacrifice, from which it derives all its merit and virtue. O Jesus, sacred Victim, alone worthy of the Supreme Being, deign to unite us to Thy sacrifice of love.

Fourth Sunday of Advent.

John's preaching in the desert.

I. POINT.

"The word of the Lord came to John in the wilderness."

(Luke III, 2.)

St. John received the word before uttering it; he was filled with it before preaching it to others; he was the disciple of God, before he became the teacher of men; he practised before teaching, that his voice might be conformed to the Word. I am only a sound that falls on the ear, said he, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness." Like our Lord, his Master, St. John began to do and then to teach: he served a long apprenticeship to virtue, in order to say nothing which

he had not first practised, and to preach by his example still more than by his words. Blessed is he, whom Thou hast instructed, O Lord, and to whom Thou hast taught Thy law (Ps. XCIII, 12). What an example for all pastors, to receive from God what they have to give; to retire into solitude before appearing to the world; to labor first to sanctify themselves before instructing others. What preparation and what holiness of life are required to render them worthy of their sacred functions!

II. POINT.

St. John, according to the testimony of Jesus Christ Himself, "was a burning and shining light" (John V, 35); burning by the holiness of his life, shining by the light of his doctrine and by his preaching; burning for God, shining for the neighbor; burning in the repose of prayer and the contemplative life, shining by the labors and exercises of the active life. He is a true and excellent model of the perfect life, imitating in anticipation Mary at the feet of Jesus, to hear His word, to see and "taste how sweet the Lord is" (Ps. XXXV, 9), and Martha occupied with works of charity towards the neighbor. On one side, he is lifted up to heaven in his meditations by an anticipated enjoyment of the holy pleasures of the house of the Lord, and, on the other, he is abased even to the care and exterior solicitude for the wants of his neighbor, serving and assisting him in his necessities, and devoting himself to these exercises of the active life, only in accordance with the principles of the contemplative life; that is, doing all for God, with reference to God, and in the presence of God.

III. POINT.

We learn from the example of St. John, that we ought to be much more interiorly occupied with God,

than exteriorly devoted to our neighbor; that we ought to apply ourselves to prayer more than to action, and to prepare ourselves for the latter by a long retreat. St. John, guided by the spirit of Jesus, gave only a few years to preaching, after having spent thirty in the solitude of a hidden life, unknown to the world, praying and conversing with God alone, fulfilling this precept addressed to all: Lay aside frivolous cares, and apply yourself to consider "that I am God". This repose of the contemplative is not idleness, for it is more fruitful and accomplishes more wonders than all the solicitude, the industry and the activity of him who is not directed by the spirit of God. Who can doubt that the silence, the retreat, not only of Jesus, but of Mary and John the Baptist, were more efficacious to obtain the salvation of the world, than the labors of all apostolic men? This made the saints say that, in the same proportion, often the prayer of a simple soul buried in oblivion, groaning at the feet of Jesus Christ, has more share in the conversion of sinners than the most brilliant missions and the most eloquent preaching; that to such prayers success is due; that by them the justice of God is disarmed, His mercy is gained, and the treasures of His grace are opened; for the prayer of the humble, says the Holy Ghost, penetrates the heavens (Eccli. XXXV, 21): the Lord regards his prayer and does not despise the desires of his heart.

Monday after the Fourth Sunday of Advent.

Christ desired and expected from the beginning of the world.

I. POINT.

All the saints of the Old Law had sighed unceasingly for the coming of the Messiah; and in the prison of Limbo they implored with ardor and inexpressible

sighing the manifestation of the Man-God by His temporal birth. O my God, do not delay, they exclaimed; manifest Thyself, show Thy power and come and help us (Ps. LXXIX, 3). The Church, in these days which immediately precede the feast of Christmas, recalls to us the continual sighs and ardent prayers of the patriarchs, by the sublime anthems which, from the first even to the last word, *O Veni*, — O come — admirably express the transports of a lively desire and a persevering expectation. Let us excite and renew these same desires in ourselves; and, uniting our prayers to the thoughts and burning desires of the old and the new Covenants, let us by urgent and repeated invitations beseech Jesus to deign to appear in the world. Come, Lord, come, O eternal Wisdom! O Adonai! O King of nations! O Emmanuel! O divine Orient! Come, enlighten those who sit in the region of darkness, in the shadow of death! Come, deliver, by the strength of Thy arm, those whom Thou hast formed of the slime of the earth; come, do not tarry.

II. POINT.

The Blessed Virgin, in union with the divine will, conceived very ardent desires to give to the world its Saviour, the Saviour so justly prayed for from the beginning of ages, and therefore called “the Expectation of the nations” (Gen. XLIX, 10), and the “Desire of the eternal hills” (Gen. XLIX, 26). The nearer she approached the happy period when she would bring Him into the world, the more her desires increased, the more she felt the ardent longings of all the ancient patriarchs united and kindled in her chaste heart. The Holy Ghost enriched her with new graces; Jesus within her, animated her, communicated to her a life of love, and accomplished great things in her. What were the

tender sentiments of her heart, her affections, the deep recollection of her soul in these days of expectation! O holy Virgin, render us worthy to honor that which we cannot comprehend. O Mother of beautiful love (Eccli. XXIV, 24), excite in us some flames of thy ardor, of thy desires and thy love.

III. POINT.

Jesus, confined in the womb of Mary, awaited the day ordained by His Father; and, as Holy Scripture says of Jacob, that the years seemed to him but a few days, because of the great love that he had for Rachel (Gen. XXIX, 20), we may also say, on this occasion, that the months seemed but a few days to Jesus, because of the ardor and strength of His love for us, a love which would have made Him suffer and wait much longer, had it been necessary, in the hope of possessing our hearts and saving our souls. O strength, O power of divine love, which thus held captive the Lord of the universe, for, by this same love, He longed to be born into the world to accomplish our salvation, to satisfy the desires and grant the prayers of the just, and to fulfil the promises and the will of His Father; but, through submission to this same will, He restrained Himself and awaited the moment which it had prescribed, doing violence to the eagerness of that charity which made Him desire to come to us. O ineffable and adorable desires of Jesus, so calculated to inflame our longings for Him! When shall we receive this precious gift, when will that blessed day come, that most desirable hour, for which kings and prophets have sighed, and which they so ardently longed to see? (Luke X, 24).

Tuesday after the Fourth Sunday of Advent.

God's abasement and man's exaltation in the mystery of the Incarnation.

I. POINT.

By the mystery of the Incarnation a communication is made of God to man, and of man to God; by this sacred mystery all the greatness of God becomes proper to man, and the littleness and infirmities of man are attributed to God. Jesus, the Man-God, without ceasing to be the Almighty, the Creator and the Lord of all things, is born of Mary, an Infant poor and suffering. An exchange was then made between us with our miseries, and God with all His greatness. We belong entirely to God, and God belongs to us. It is the ladder of Jacob, by which God descends to man, and man ascends to God; therefore, our Lord calls His Incarnation an ascent and a descent: no one, says He, has gone up to heaven save Him, who came down from heaven, the Son of Man, who is in heaven (John III, 13). He descended in becoming man; He ascended when man in Him became God: both prodigies were accomplished when the Word was made flesh. O miracle of divine charity! O glorious exchange, so advantageous to us!

II. POINT.

Let the Christian acknowledge, says St. Leo, how great is his dignity and his nobility. Let us not degenerate from our illustrious extraction, from that spiritual new-birth which we have received in Jesus Christ and by Jesus Christ, and by which we have become His brethren, His children and the co-heirs of His kingdom (Heb. II, 13). Let us henceforth have only contempt and disdain for all worldly glory, since the heavenly and eternal glory is ours by Jesus Christ, who, in clothing Himself with our nature, has rendered us "partakers

of the divine nature" (2 Pet. I, 4): an eminent dignity of redeemed man, which gives him the right to exalt himself by a holy pride, according to St. Augustine, above all that is not God, to attach himself to God more purely, more ardently and perfectly.

III. POINT.

Let us then forget all the lowness of our first birth, to conform our life and our morals to the new state, to which Jesus Christ elevates us by His Incarnation. Be ye imitators of God, says St. Paul, as beloved children (Ephes. V, 1). "Walk worthy of your calling" (Ephes. IV, 1). Render a tribute of gratitude to "Him who has called you from darkness to His admirable light" (1 Pet. II, 9). O my Lord Jesus, Thou who, by the excess of Thy incomprehensible charity, hast deigned to become Man in order to render men gods (Ps. LXXXI, 6); Thou who hast chosen to be all ours, that we might be all Thine, grant that, being all Thine and belonging to Thee, as to our supreme Author, by a necessary dependence, we may be, if possible, still more absolutely and entirely Thine by a donation wholly free, and a voluntary gratitude; may we be the servants of Thy love, as we are of Thy power, and may we be able to say to Thee as Thou didst to Thy Father: All that I have is Thine, and all that Thou hast is Mine; and with the Spouse: My Beloved is mine, and I am His (Cant. II, 16).

Wednesday after the Fourth Sunday of Advent.

Necessity of penance.

I. POINT.

St. John preached the "baptism of penance for the remission of sins". (Luke III, 3.)

He preached much more by his examples than by his words: he preached by the severity and the austerity

of his life, by the great purity and innocence of his morals; for he never sinned even venially, as is generally believed, and yet he practised a long and very severe penance. His abode was a frightful desert; his companions were wild beasts; his clothing was a camel-skin; his food, "locusts and wild honey" (Mat. III, 4). What will become of us who continually commit fresh faults, and who do not know what it is to do penance! And yet if no saint has ever been sure of attaining to glory, unless he has left signs and examples of penance, what security do we think we have for our salvation, if we do not follow the same steps!

II. POINT.

Fear and love are called by St. Bernard the feet of the soul, which guide us to God. This made David say: Fear the Lord and rejoice in Him with trembling (Ps. II, 11). Lord, "pierce my flesh with Thy fear" (Ps. CXVIII, 120); and St. Paul says: Although my conscience does not reproach me anything, "I am not hereby justified; for it is the Lord, who judgeth me" (1 Cor. IV, 4). "I chastise my body and bring it into subjection, lest while I preach to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Cor. IX, 27). If the Lord searches Jerusalem with a lantern in His hand, even in its most hidden recesses (Sophon. I, 12), what ought I to fear, I who am only sin, and what confidence shall I have in the little good that I do, if He judges even justice? (Ps. LXXIV, 3). This thought caused the greatest saints to walk in humble circumspection before God, to weep bitterly over their least faults, and to expiate them by rigorous penance. Their gratitude towards God and their love for Him was the measure of their fear and sorrow: they dreaded above all to offend Him, whom they loved above all, and whom they knew to be

infinitely amiable and worthy of being loved above all, and they thought they could never sufficiently punish themselves for their ingratitude towards Him. O Jesus, grant that we may be like Thy saints, equally animated with fear and the love of Thy adorable name.

III. POINT.

St. John was the first who, by the example of the solitude and continual contemplation in which he lived, cast upon earth the seed of that retired and eremitical life, which so many thousands of holy souls, attracted by the sweet perfume of his virtues, have since embraced; for all solitaries invoke him as their patron and patriarch. In imitation of him, they fled from the dangers of the world, which they renounced, in order that they might not be enslaved by them, or allow themselves to be corrupted by earthly pleasures; they left men in order to find God. Let us compare our indifference, our insensibility, with the salutary fear and wise precaution of the saints. O admirable precursor of Jesus, and perfect model of innocence, draw us with thee into solitude to converse with God alone; imprint in us, by thy examples and words, that loving fear of God, which will render us intrepid in regard to every evil but sin; for he who fears the Lord, dreads nothing (Eccli. XXXIV, 16); He knows no danger but that of displeasing Him and forfeiting His love.

Thursday after the Fourth Sunday of Advent.

Dispositions to receive Jesus Christ worthily.

I. POINT.

"Behold I send My angel to prepare My way before Me."
(Mat. III, 1.)

John the Baptist is the angel sent by God; he is "the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare ye

the way of the Lord, make straight His paths" (Luke III, 4). What is this preparation announced by the prophets, and preached by the holiest of all men? God Himself has prescribed it to us, and we find our model in this other prophecy: "Behold thy King will come to thee, the just and Saviour, He is poor, and riding upon an ass" (Zach. IX, 9). We must go to meet the Lord, says a saint, by the same way that He comes to us. He comes to us as the just One; we must straighten our crooked and winding ways by the rule of His immutable justice. Wisdom cannot dwell in a heart subject to sin (Wis. IX, 17); light cannot dwell with darkness, nor Jesus Christ with Belial (2 Cor. VI, 15). "Justice and judgment are the ornaments of His throne" (Ps. LXXXVIII, 15); "let us lay aside the works of darkness" (Rom. XIII, 12), let us cease to do evil, let us break asunder the chains of our malice (Is. LVIII, 6); let us judge ourselves, groan over our iniquities, condemn our criminal life, and, according to the counsel of the prophet, "let us turn away from evil and do good" (Ps. XXXIII, 15); let us go by the paths of penance and justice to meet Him, who comes to us just and holy, and who is the source of all justice and holiness.

II. POINT.

"Every valley shall be filled, every mountain and hill shall be brought low" (Luke III, 5). Jesus Christ comes to us poor and meek, in the humility of His flesh; He seeks His repose in the humble heart, in the heart that has become, by its voluntary abasement, a valley fertile in good works, always watered with the abundant and salutary rain of grace (Ps. LXVII, 10), which the Lord reserves for His own, that is, for them who imitate Him and follow Him in His humiliation. Let us level the hills, the elevations of pride, of pre-

sumption, of vain glory; let us bring down the high mountains of vanity and haughtiness; let us destroy all the false ideas of human greatness; let us acknowledge ourselves as poor, miserable and sinful; and let us go thus, little and abject in our own eyes, empty of the vain prejudices of our self-love, to meet our King, who comes to us stripped of the splendor of His majesty, concealing all His greatness under the appearance of our littleness, with the intention of healing the old wound of our pride by His humility, because He gives His grace to the humble, and refuses it to the proud.

III. POINT.

Finally, Jesus Christ comes to us as a Saviour, to deliver us from the darkness and captivity of sin; He comes to us full of goodness, of tenderness and compassion for our miseries; may His charity then animate and urge us (2 Cor. V, 14): let us go to Him with love, with confidence and gratitude. We must receive with love, what love alone gives to us, says St. Francis de Sales, speaking of the Communion of the Sacred Body of Jesus Christ. This mystery, say the Fathers, is not only a lively image and a faithful expression, but also an extension of the Incarnation; since the same Son of God, who, in the Incarnation, clothed Himself with our humanity, renders it really present in the Eucharist, where He again becomes incarnate in the hands of His ministers. The only ambition which He had for us, in the accomplishment of the first mystery, and the institution of the second, was to come into our hearts to purify them, to sanctify them and possess them: the same dispositions, therefore, are needed for both, since they are alike the work of His charity. O Jesus, who didst come into the world, and who dost descend into our hearts, only to kindle in them the fire of Thy love,

melt the ice of mine, consume it with Thy divine flames, render me a captive and the slave of Thy love. With St. Paul may I glory in my bonds, as the captive of Jesus Christ and for Jesus Christ.

Friday after the Fourth Sunday of Advent.

Christ's love for man, the motive of His Incarnation.

I. POINT.

One of the first and most powerful motives which urged the Son of the Most High to become man, the motive which is expressly mentioned in Holy Scriptures, is the salvation of the world, the redemption of the human race, and the destruction of sin. "The Son of man," He says of Himself, "came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke XIX, 10); "He came to save sinners, of whom I am the chief," said St. Paul (1 Tim. I, 15). God from all eternity remembered men, and formed the design of saving them all in general, and each one in particular. Upon earth, during the days of His mortal life, He multiplied miracles, He suffered ignominious treatment and continual trials, not only for all men, but for each one, as if he had been the only one to save, so that I may say with the apostle: "He loved me, and delivered Himself for me" (Gal. II, 20); He gave Himself entirely for me, a sinner; He came down from heaven, He consumed His life in sufferings for the salvation of my guilty soul, as if He loved it alone. O ineffable mercy of our God, by which the eternal "Orient came from on high to visit us"! (Luke I, 78). O charity of God which made Him give His Son to redeem His slave!

II. POINT.

God had abundant means to save man, and to deliver him from his misery; but, in all the treasures

of His infinite wisdom, He found none more suitable to heal us, none more worthy of His greatness, than the Incarnation of His Son. God wished to appear "in the likeness of man" (Phil. II, 7), to show how much He loved us, and how much He desired to be loved by us. He wished to conquer our malice by His goodness, and our coldness by the fire of His charity, so that, if hitherto we had been slothful in loving Him, we might henceforth become eager to render Him love for love. The resemblance between men is the cause of their mutual love; but in God it is an effect and a mark of His love, since He made Himself similar to us, only that He might win our love, and that, in loving Him, we might become similar to Him, worthy to be loved by Him, and happy with Him.

III. POINT.

This mystery of love was prefigured by the burning bush (Exod. III, 2), the fire of which was a figure of the divinity, for God is called a "consuming fire" (Deut. IV, 24); and the thorns represented the humanity to which the divinity was united, since, in fact, the Word was made flesh to suffer for us. The union of God with man is the burning bush of His charity towards us: a charity infinitely powerful to kindle in our hearts the most ardent love for Him. A great sacrament of mercy and piety, as the apostle calls it, and of which the Saviour Himself, considering the excess of the divine love, said with astonishment: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son" (John III, 16). Let us then exclaim with Moses: "I will go and see this great sight" (Exod. III, 3), this mystery of love, so sublime, so ineffable in its greatness, that it surpasses all the lights of the created intelligences; a mystery hidden in God before all ages, but "now revealed" (Ephes. III, 5), manifested and

accomplished in the fulness of time. Let us take off our shoes, that is, let us lay aside earthly thoughts and affections, that we may approach with reverence, and contemplate this master-piece of boundless charity.

Eve of Christmas.

Journey of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph to Bethlehem.

I. POINT.

By a secret counsel of Divine Providence, St. Joseph receives the order to go to Bethlehem, the city of his family. Jesus, after having offered Himself to His Father as a Victim of obedience, after having spent nine months hidden in the womb of His holy Mother, subject to all her movements, and living only by her life, begins in her, and by her, to submit to the commands of sinful men, and to obey an emperor of earth. O marvellous humility of a God, who abases Himself to the lowest state! The President of Syria obeys Caesar, Joseph obeys the President, Mary obeys Joseph, and Jesus obeys Mary. Mary bearing the treasure of the world, the wonder of heaven and earth, nevertheless submits; she subjects herself without excuse; urged by the spirit of her Son, she obeys promptly, simply, and faithfully. An admirable example, given by the Son and the Mother, of an obedience, blind, humble, and perfect; an example which condemns our replies and our proud reasoning!

II. POINT.

Mary and Joseph left Nazareth to go to Bethlehem. They had a long journey to make, in the coldest and most rigorous season of the year. The Blessed Virgin, nearing the time of her delivery, was poor and without comforts for so sudden and fatiguing a journey, in which she would be exposed to all the inclemency of the

weather; and yet all this was in accordance with an express order of Divine Wisdom. Augustus, to satisfy at the same time his pride and his avarice, ordered a census of all his people (Luke II, 1); but Jesus made this event serve for the accomplishment of His eternal will, by which He had resolved to be born in poverty, humility and suffering. O thoughts of God, far above those of men! Wisdom, power, goodness, which can and will make use of all, even of evil itself, to attain its ends! How perfect was the conformity of Mary with Jesus! What harmony, what intimate union of the heart of the Mother with the heart of the Son! Grant, O Jesus, that, like her, we may submit to all Thy designs and all Thy counsels for us, however severe and rigorous they may seem.

III. POINT.

Let us share the fatigue of these holy travelers, let us follow their steps and their thoughts. Because of poverty and the great concourse of people who thronged into Bethlehem from all directions, "there was no room for them in the inn", so that the Queen of angels found no place but an abandoned stable, to serve as a palace for the God who was to be born. "He came unto His own," says St. John, "and His own received Him not" (John I, 11); "the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." Blessed and precious crib, first throne of the King of kings! O Jesus, may my heart be the place that will receive Thee at Thy birth, since Thou dost not wish for any other on earth; during Thy whole life, Thou "hadst not where to lay Thy head" (Mat. VIII, 20), and Thou didst die before all the people upon the cross; and why was this, unless because Thou didst wish to come, to live, to die, only to possess our hearts? May mine be Thy inheritance and Thy abode!

Come, take Thy birth therein, O Lord; come, live and reign there forever.

Christmas-Day.

The birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I. POINT.

As nature, when the night is in the midst of its course, reposes in tranquil silence, so the world, under the dominion of a single monarch, enjoyed profound peace, when the Son of God, descending from His throne, began to appear upon earth. He, who disposes of all things, wished to be born under such circumstances, to show that the whole universe would be subject to His peaceful empire, that He came to dissipate by His light the night and darkness of sin, and that He entered into the world as the author of the eternal peace which He came to cement between God and men; for it is He, who broke down the "wall of division" that separated us from heaven, and He Himself became our peace and our only Mediator to reconcile us with His Father (Ephes. II, 16). O precious moment, which is the centre of all ages, which delivers captives, sanctifies sinners, saves the world, and reunites earth with heaven; for, at this moment, the blessed inhabitants of heaven descend in multitudes to seek their King on earth, and to announce from Him "to men of good will" (Luke II, 14) that peace which the world cannot give. O Jesus, "Prince of peace" (Is. IX, 6), come, establish it in my heart, taking new birth therein: drive from it the trouble and tumult of my passions: may it be forever subject to Thy peaceful reign.

II. POINT.

This happy moment renders to the Blessed Trinity a glory worthy of its greatness. The empire of its

Providence was then infinitely increased and exalted; before, its power was used only over created things; henceforth it will have a right to exercise its authority over God Himself, that is, over Jesus, the Man-God. Jesus, begotten from all eternity "in the splendor of the saints" (Ps. CIX, 3), and proclaimed thrice holy (Is. VI, 3) by the choirs of the heavenly intelligences, is born here below, humble and suffering; but nevertheless a Saint, and the Saint of saints, to sanctify the children of Adam born in sin, and to transform them into true adorers of God. Jesus, then, by His birth, accomplished a double office, the one towards God by adoration, the other towards us by sanctification. On this day God begins to be worthily adored upon earth by the profound submission of His Son. O Jesus, perfect adorer, unite the affections of our hearts to the adorations and love of Thy most holy soul, that, with it and by it, we may worthily adore and love Thy divinity.

III. POINT.

The birth of Jesus was accomplished in a most holy manner, truly appropriate to a God; for, far from injuring the integrity and the virginity of His august Mother, He rather increased and consecrated it, having gone forth from her womb as the ray of the sun penetrates the crystal, without destroying it, and as He afterwards went forth from the sepulchre closed and sealed, before the angel had lifted the stone. At this moment Jesus uttered His first cry and His first groans to His Father, to whom, in this new state of annihilation and humiliation, He offered His mortal flesh for us, as a holy and living victim. O first and favorable apparition of Jesus, our God and Saviour in His humanity! (Tit. III, 4). Mary beheld Him and adored Him as her God; she loved Him as her Son, and urged by

these two affections of reverence and love, she took Him in her hands, received Him in her bosom, "wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger" (Luke II, 7), as we learn from the sacred text. O admirable dispositions in Mary, of faith, of reverence and love. May we imitate them at the altar, and when approaching holy Communion.

December 26th.

Feast of St. Stephen.

I. POINT.

Jesus came upon earth as a rich merchant, to traffic with us: He takes our indigence and gives us His treasures; He clothes Himself with our lowliness and elevates us to His glory; He receives our infirmities and bears our sorrows; He suffers our languor and renders Himself a sharer in our miseries, to load us with all kinds of goods. St. Stephen is filled with strength and virtue, because Jesus has taken his weakness. See Jesus in the stable, poor, humble and groaning, and St. Stephen triumphant and glorious in heaven, through the labors of Jesus. St. Stephen enters into the repose of the God-man; he is enriched by His indigence, glorified by His opprobrium, exalted by His humiliations, and becomes blessed by His sufferings. O exchange full of love and mercy! O Jesus, since Thou hast taken upon Thyself all my miseries, put me in possession of all Thy riches and all Thy treasures.

II. POINT.

St. Stephen in the midst of his torments sees Jesus, because affliction instructs and enlightens us: the cross opens our eyes, and suffering reveals Jesus to us. As formerly Jacob had seen God at the top of the mysterious ladder (Gen. XXVIII, 12), so St. Stephen saw Him

in heaven, seeming to show to him the end of his course, and saying to him: "The servant is not greater than his Master" (John XV, 25). If "it was necessary that Christ should suffer to enter into His glory" (Luke XXIV, 26), His servant must share His sufferings, in order to be crowned. "He saw Jesus standing" (Acts VII, 55), as the spectator of his combat, to aid him, to strengthen him, to extend his hand to him, and to recompense his victory. How powerful was the presence of Jesus, how efficacious to animate his martyrdom! Therefore he forgets his torments, and full of strength and joy, he exclaims: "I see the heavens open, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God" (Acts VII, 55). O Jesus, sustain me by Thy presence, and may I always regard Thee as my strength, my support, and my exceeding great reward.

III. POINT.

Jesus suffered for us, says the prince of the apostles, giving us an example that we might follow His steps (1 Peter II, 21). St. Stephen followed them the first, and he first gave to Jesus blood for blood, life for life, and death for death; he was the glorious head of the martyrs, who were animated by his courage; therefore, he saw the heavens open which had been closed to men, until Jesus had entered it by His death, after having smoothed the way for us by His life. St. Stephen walked in His steps, and having been the first to imitate Him in His sufferings, he was also the first to see the heavens opened, and the word of Jesus began to be verified: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away" (Mat. XI, 12). St. Stephen, who had learned this truth from Jesus, experienced it the first, and he teaches it to us by his example; for the heavens were opened to him by the

violence which he endured, and by the blows of stones which he received. Give us grace, O Jesus, to do ourselves this salutary violence which merits and ravishes heaven.

December 27th.

Feast of St. John the Evangelist.

I. POINT.

“The disciple whom Jesus loved” (John XXI, 20).

The whole eulogy of St. John is contained in these words, and all his greatness is comprised in the predilection with which his divine Master honored him. The love of Jesus contains all; for this good Saviour procures all kinds of goods for those whom He loves; and communicates them to them: therefore, how great were the fruits of His love for St. John! What great things were accomplished in him! Jesus, in loving him, rendered him worthy of His love; He made him equal to the angels in purity, to the seraphim in charity. This faithful disciple was no less the passionate lover of Jesus than the object of His tenderness; therefore, urged by the love which forestalled him, he exclaims with an ardor truly divine: “Let us love God, since He first loved us” (1 John IV, 19). O love of Jesus, fruitful source of all good, root of our merit, and cause of our eternal life! If man gives all that he has, if he gives himself for so great a treasure, in possessing it he will despise all else, and will regard every other good as a mere nothing.

II. POINT.

St. John, full of the confidence inspired by a reciprocal love, reposes on the sacred breast of Jesus (John XIII, 25), upon that divine Heart, which is his treasure and his delight. Jesus, as the only-begotten Son of God, is in the bosom of the Father, and St. John

reposes on the bosom of Jesus, as His beloved disciple. Jesus receives all from His Father—His essence and His divine knowledge, and He makes St. John a sharer in His highest mysteries; He opens His heart to him, and reveals to him all its secrets. What He said to His apostles: I have declared to you all that I have learned of My Father (John XVII, 8), is more excellently and particularly verified in St. John; for he was the eagle among the evangelists. If St. Paul, ravished to the third heaven, learned there hidden mysteries (2 Cor. XII, 2), St. John ascended much higher and above all the heavens, even to the bosom of the Father, in reposing upon that of the Son; and it is from this Divine Source, that he drew the sublime knowledge of the eternal generation of the Word and of His temporal birth. O Sacred Heart of Jesus, sweet repose of the soul that loves Thee, may I be worthy to repose in Thee, may I be enlightened with Thy light, inflamed and consumed with Thy love.

III. POINT.

Love cannot bear separation nor banishment from its object. St. John cannot leave his Master, he is inseparable from Him in life and death. The natural horror of torture and the surroundings of the cross cannot keep him away; he follows Him to Calvary, he sees Him expire there, and he receives the counterstroke of His sufferings. Upon Calvary he was made a martyr, and more than a martyr; for there he suffered, not by the hand of man, but by the Passion and the sufferings of God Himself, which love made him feel. Jesus, seeing the beloved disciple plunged in sadness, forgets His own sufferings to console him; He confides to him that which He holds most dear; He gives him His holy Mother to be his own: "Behold thy Mother," said He

(John XIX, 27), and from that moment St. John regarded the Blessed Virgin as his Mother, and rendered to her the duties of a son, full of respect and love. O precious gift, O rich treasure, which gives to St. John a singular power to procure for souls the powerful protection of Jesus and Mary. O holy Mother of God, Mother of St. John, vouchsafe to receive us through him into the number of thy servants and children.

December 28th.

Feast of the Holy Innocents.

I. POINT.

Jesus was persecuted on earth as soon as He was born. He, our treasure and our happiness, was unknown and alone, in a stable more fit to serve as a refuge to hide Himself, than as a dwelling or a place of repose; and even He is driven away from it. "Take the child and His Mother," said the angel to St. Joseph, "and fly into Egypt, for Herod will seek the child to destroy Him" (Mat. II, 13). O Judea! Ungrateful land that rejects its God, or knows Him only to persecute Him; which, far from receiving Him when He comes to save it, banishes Him and obliges Him to flee into a strange land! O insensible and rebellious land, which represents the blind and hardened heart of the proud sinner, who knows Jesus only to dishonor Him! O Providence of God, which makes His Son enter so early into the way of suffering and labors! This beloved Son experiences, from His first appearance in the world, the mad fury and ingratitude of men, who repay His benefits only by their outrages. O my Lord Jesus, may I follow Thee in Thy exile, may I follow Thee everywhere, and may I never abandon Thee!

II. POINT.

Jesus "retired into Egypt" (Mat. II, 14). He,

who can do all things, chose, in order to escape the hatred of Herod, a means which concealed His supreme power, and which we make use of on similar occasions because of our weakness. He, who had formerly prepared a paradise for man, who had given to His servants Enoch and Elias a place of repose, chose none for Himself; He exiles Himself into a heathen and hostile country, and wishes to bear all the miseries and inconveniences of a humiliating flight and a long sojourn in a strange land. O God fleeing before Thy enemies, as if Thou didst need to seek Thy security in flight, Thou hadst it entire and present in Thy almighty power. Make me flee from sin and all the occasions of displeasing Thee; and since Thy flight is only to expiate the many escapes that I have sought from the loving pursuits of Thy grace and Thy inspirations, grant me this day to co-operate constantly with these graces and inspirations. I will await them with humble patience and implore them with unremitting fervor. Abandon me not, O Lord, although I have so often and so unworthily compelled Thee to flee from my ungrateful soul.

III. POINT.

God makes His greatest enemies serve for the accomplishment of His designs. How great was the good produced by the unjust persecution of Herod! The salvation and sanctification of the little Innocents, who, had they lived, would perhaps have been the murderers of Jesus Christ. They were His martyrs; they confessed His divine name, not in speaking, but in dying; and Jesus, in rendering them His victims, accomplished their salvation by His mercy alone, and without any merit on their part. Moreover, by the massacre of these blessed children, the fame and glory of Jesus, whom Herod had wished to destroy at His birth, were spread

over the whole earth; from their dumb lips God received a perfect and brilliant praise (Ps. VIII, 3). O almighty Goodness of God, who turns all things to our advantage, blessed fate of these children, whose precious death was their triumph and their salvation! Grant, O Lord, that with them we may confess Thee by dying to the world and to ourselves, to live henceforth only for Thee.

December 29th.

The Infant Jesus manifested to the angels and to the shepherds.

I. POINT.

The first manifestation of Jesus after His birth was made to the angels, who acknowledged Him and adored Him as their Lord, their King and their true God. At His feet they humbled themselves profoundly, rendering to his supreme majesty the homage of their obedience, of their submission and their fidelity, adoring Him with respect, according to these words of Scripture: "When He (the Father) bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, He saith: And let all the angels adore Him" (Hebr. I, 6). The multitude of these heavenly spirits proclaim His praises, and each one, filled with joy at the birth of the Saviour, invites us to bless Him, and to celebrate His praises in thanksgiving. "Sing to the Lord a new canticle" (Ps. XCVII, 1), because He has made known to us the salvation that He has given to us. Thus the royal prophet expresses himself; thus we ought to express ourselves with him, the better to unite in the hymns of delight with which the celestial host makes the heavens resound this day. O first and most worthy adoration which all the blessed spirits offered to Jesus at His birth; an adoration at which we ought to rejoice with the just who love the glory of His coming! "Sion heard it," says David, "and was glad" (Ps.

XCVI, 8). In union with the angels we adore Thee, O Jesus, and we submit to Thy greatness in its abasement.

II. POINT.

The second manifestation of Jesus was made to the shepherds by these words of the angel: "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy that shall be to all the people: a Saviour is born unto you" (Luke II, 10). Blessed were those shepherds to whom was announced the wisdom of the Father, the light of the world, He, whom the prophets and kings desired to see (Luke X, 24). Blessed, because they were the first to know the divine Object, in the clear vision and love of whom all our future felicity should consist! Blessed finally, for among all the just of the Old Law, they were chosen to receive the first grace of the Messiah's coming. O Jesus, grant that I may know Thee, and that I may seek no happiness but that which comes from Thee, that with Thy apostle I may despise all other knowledge (Phil. III, 8), to attain to this: vouchsafe to manifest Thyself to me, and render me a participator in the graces of Thy new life.

III. POINT.

The new light and the fresh sentiments of beatific joy, produced in the angels by the presence and manifestation of the Infant Jesus, were communicated to the shepherds by these pure spirits. The first grace received by the shepherds was the joy of the Holy Ghost, with which they were all filled at the word of the angel, and much more at the sight of the holy Child. The second grace was an interior light, which came to them from heaven, enabling them to seek and know Jesus; a light represented by the heavenly brightness which surrounded them; finally, the third was the fervent desire to find Him, which animated them and inspired them

with a holy eagerness, expressed by these words: "They came with haste" (Luke II, 16). O amiable Jesus, give me grace to seek Thee by ardent desires, and to find Thee by good works. Divine Infant, who art the light of the world and the joy of angels and men, enlighten our minds, be henceforth the only object, motive and subject of our delight, and may we have pleasure and satisfaction in Thee alone.

December 30th, or the Sunday in the Octave of Christmas.

The emotions of Mary and Joseph at the sight of the Infant Jesus.

I. POINT.

Joseph and Mary wondered at what was said of Jesus (Luke II, 33). Jesus is called admirable, wonderful (Is. IX, 6), and He is truly so, not only to men upon earth, but also to the angels in heaven, since, by all the excellence and sublimity of their natural light, they could not know the mystery of a God made man: therefore, this mystery is called by the apostle "the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ, and the dispensation of the mystery hidden from eternity in God" (Ephes. III, 8, 9); and by St. Denis: the apparition of God in the flesh, a manifestation ineffable to all created tongues, unknown to all intelligences, even the most sublime among the angels. It is, then, this great mystery, this marvellous invention of divine wisdom, which Joseph and Mary contemplated, adored, and in which they were constantly absorbed. Silence, contemplation, continual adoration; these three words contain the summary of their life, and should also fill ours. Happy he, who is occupied only with Jesus on earth! That alone is sufficient to secure his happiness in heaven.

II. POINT.

Joseph and Mary admired the eternal God, beginning to be poor and suffering like the other children of

men, and able to say with truth: "I drew in the common air, I fell upon the earth, and the first voice which I uttered was crying, as all others do" (Wis. VII, 3). They listened to His first cries, which had power to penetrate the heavens and to draw upon us all graces; they received His first tears, worthy and sufficient to wash away all stains and drown all the sins of the world; they saw with astonishment, that, as man by his presumption had wished to resemble God, according to these words: "Behold Adam is become as one of us" (Gen. III, 22), so God had rendered Himself like unto man, knowing good by knowledge, and evil by His own experience of all the sufferings and miseries proper to humanity. O divine Majesty, humbled in order to elevate us! O sovereign Wisdom, teaching us by His silence! O God, happy and suffering! O subjection of a God to our weaknesses and our necessities, worthy object of our most lively gratitude and most profound admiration.

III. POINT.

They admired the work of the charity of God for us, the union of two extremes so dissimilar, of the greatness of God with our littleness, of His glory with our ignominy, of His wisdom with infancy, of His omnipotence with our infirmities. They admired Him who is born the Son of Adam, but who is God; Him who is between two animals, and at the same time "seated upon the Cherubim" (Ps. LXXIX, 2); Him who weeps and sobs in a stable, who is announced and praised by the angels, and who imparts motion to the heavens; they admired Him who governs all things, by whom they were made, who established the heavens, and created the light (Ps. XXXII, 6), dwelling with us here below. It is no longer heaven which pours salutary influences upon the earth, it is from the earth that Jesus, the true

“Sun of justice”, newly-born and lying on the straw, enlightens paradise with the light of His glory. O God, great in the lowest things! Thou art great, and we cannot sufficiently praise Thee; Thou art little, and we cannot sufficiently love thee.

December 31st.

The dispositions we should have at the close of the year.

I. POINT.

Jesus was established by His Father the source of all grace and the cause of our salvation; He was also instituted to be our end; because, as Judge of the living and the dead, He will beatify our souls by the sight of His divinity, and our bodies by that of His holy humanity; therefore He said: “I am the beginning and the end” (Apoc. I, 8). We should then begin and end our years by Him and with Him: for this it is well to take to-day the knife prepared for His circumcision, to acknowledge the multitude of our defects, and the thousand ways in which we have abused His grace and our vocation, that we may humble ourselves profoundly and excite ourselves to lively sorrow. Let us shed tears for the blood which Jesus is about to shed, let us weigh His mercies and our ingratitude, His countless benefits and our numberless sins: thus should we circumcise ourselves for the past with the knife of contrition, and for the future, by the cutting off of our vices, by the fear of God, and by earnest and efficacious resolutions to lead a new life. O Jesus, be Thou the beginning and the end of my years, of my days, of my moments and of my whole life, that all my actions may be done by Thee, may end by Thee, may terminate in Thee, and be referred to Thy glory.

II. POINT.

Let us finish our years, remembering that Jesus

upon the cross completed the fulfilment of the will and the designs of His Father, when He said: "It is consummated" (John XIX, 30). And, uniting ourselves to the Blessed Virgin, let us ask through her intercession, that, at the last moment of our life, we, like Him, may have consummated all our duties, profited by all His graces, accomplished His will, and corresponded faithfully with all His designs; but, above all, in that decisive moment may we not be deprived of the all-important grace of final perseverance, which Jesus merited for us by His birth, His life and His death,—a grace which we ought continually to ask for, and to seek efficaciously by good works.

III. POINT.

Finally, let us end each year, as we would wish to end our life, and as if that which we are completing, would terminate all the others; let us finish them in the same dispositions, in which we desire to be and to appear at the judgment of God, and in the same state in which we wish to remain throughout eternity. What, then, will be our thoughts, our desires? What would we wish to have done? Let us renew our zeal for our advancement in the pure love of God; let us acknowledge that outside of Him there is only "vanity and affliction of spirit under the sun" (Eccles. I, 14); that all else, which is not for eternity, is only an illusion; that all that does not, in some manner, tend to eternal life, tends to eternal death. Our years have rolled away rapidly; they imperceptibly hasten us on towards our end; but have they hitherto brought us nearer to God, who is our supernatural and blessed end? Have we as many good works, as days and moments to offer Him? Alas! what remains to us of all our years, except perhaps shame, confusion and regret for having passed

them uselessly, and for having employed for our ruin the precious time, which, in the designs of Jesus Christ, was intended to sanctify us and effect our eternal salvation.

January 1st.

Feast of our Lord's Circumcision.

Dispositions to begin the new year well.

I. POINT.

Jesus shed the first drops of His blood to sanctify the beginning of His life, and to give us a pledge of what He would one day do for us on the Cross, on which He was to end His life by shedding His blood to the last drop. The eagerness of His love so urged Him, that He could not bear any delay: it was not so much the envy of the Jews, or the cruelty of the soldiers, that drew the blood from His veins on Calvary, as His love for us and His obedience to His Father. Listen to the voice of this blood, O heavenly Father, for it "speaks better" and more loudly "than that of Abel" (Heb. XII, 24). This divine blood, a single drop of which is sufficient to efface all the sins of the world, to sanctify all men, adequately to satisfy Thy justice and to extinguish all the flames of hell, implores mercy for sinners. On this first day of the year mark with this adorable blood the doors and entrances of our souls (Exod. XII, 7), that the exterminating angel may not approach them, that Thy enemies may tremble in seeing it, that they may take flight (Ps. LXVII, 2), and that, purified by its virtue, we may this day partake worthily of the spotless Lamb, in whose blood we have been washed and redeemed.

II. POINT.

If we cannot give to Jesus blood for blood, at least let us give Him love for love; let us consecrate to Him

all the moments of this New Year, and begin it by circumcising ourselves with Him. Circumcise your hearts, said the prophet (Jer. IV, 4): this is the true circumcision which Jesus demands of us, which He teaches us by His example in accomplishing this mystery, and the grace of which He imparts to us by His merits. Let us banish self-love from our hearts, that Jesus may enter and triumph therein. Let us learn from Him to hate ourselves with a holy hatred, to leave all to follow Him, to die to ourselves, that we may live to Him alone, to strip ourselves of the old man and clothe ourselves with the new (Col. III, 10). This is the spiritual circumcision, necessary for all and possible to all. O good Jesus, grant us grace to deprive ourselves of all, that we may possess Thee, to hate ourselves in order to love Thee, to lose ourselves in order to find Thee, since, according to Thy word, "he that loveth his life shall lose it," and he who shall lose it for love of Thee, shall preserve it unto life everlasting (John XII, 25).

III. POINT.

Let us begin each of our years as the angels began their eternity, by a profound adoration of the supreme majesty of God, by an invariable conformity of our will to His. Let us begin them as the Blessed Virgin began her life: from the first moment she entered into the way of grace to which God called her, she co-operated perfectly with this grace, and always advanced from virtue to virtue to the highest degree of a pure and ardent love of God. Finally, we ought to begin each of our years in a holy manner, in memory and in honor of the first instant of the most holy life of Jesus on earth; we ought to offer ourselves to Him in union with the oblation and the perfect consecration which He made of Himself to His Father. O Jesus, may I accept

with Thee all Thy holy will, may I accomplish all the desires of Thy most Sacred Heart for me; may I correspond faithfully to Thy graces and to my vocation, may Thy glory be the motive of all the actions of my life, and may I be able to say to Thee this day, for all the moments of this year: "Thou shalt call me," O my God, "and I will answer Thee" (Job XIV, 15).

January 2nd.

Holiness, dignity and efficacy of the holy Name of Jesus.

I. POINT.

"His name is holy and terrible" (Ps. CX, 9).

The name of Jesus is holy, because this name was chosen and given by God. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus," said the angel (Mat. I, 21). It is holy because it was given by God Himself, and it became the name of God; therefore, it is honored in the heavens, adored by the angels, and cannot be worthily uttered without the motion and grace of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. XII, 3). This name is above every name; at this name every knee should bend in heaven, on earth and in hell (Phil. II, 10); "from the rising of the sun until the going down of the same, the name of the Lord is worthy of praise" (Ps. CXII, 3); finally, everything should be done in this sacred name (Col. III, 17), to the honor and glory of Him whom it designates. The name of Jesus is terrible, it overthrows the powers of hell, which "believe and tremble", says St. James (James II, 19); this name triumphs over the malice of the devils, it is a buckler, impenetrable to all the shafts of their envy; it is our strength and our virtue against their temptations; for it is in this name that we venture to speak to God and to approach Him with confidence. "O God, save me in Thy name" (Ps. LIII, 3); "for the glory of Thy

name deliver us, O Lord" (Ps. LXXVIII, 9), We glory in Thy name: O God, may it protect us (Ps. XIX, 2), and may it defend us against all the assaults of our enemies.

II. POINT.

The giving of a name supposes a knowledge of him to whom it is given: thus Adam gave to all the animals the names that were suitable to them, because God had endowed him with a perfect knowledge of their nature and character. "No one", says Jesus, "knoweth the Father but the Son, and no one knoweth the Son but the Father" (Mat. XI, 27). It belonged, then, only to the Father to name His Son, since He alone knows Him. He called Him Jesus, a name sweet and efficacious, powerful and amiable, because it signifies Saviour: "Thou shalt call His name Jesus," said the angel, "because He shall save His people from their sins" (Mat. I, 21); He will save them with a powerful arm and an efficacious virtue; He will save them by means full of meekness, of goodness and mercy. "I will draw them," says He, "by the cords of Adam," by all the attractions and inducements of charity (Osee XI, 4). This divine name is suitable only to Jesus, because He alone delivers us from eternal death; and He delivers not merely a single nation, but the whole universe (1 Tim. I, 15), says St. Paul. It is by His name alone, says St. Peter, that He saves His people; and "there is no other name under heaven, whereby we must be saved" (Acts IV, 12). O Jesus, give me a share in this salvation, which Thou didst come to procure for all men, of whom I am the most miserable.

III. POINT.

Jesus, from the first day of His life, chose not only to take the name, the title and the office of Sav-

iour, but also to exercise it by the shedding of His blood in the circumcision. He began to appear as Jesus, not by working miracles, but by suffering and humbling Himself; not by placing upon us a heavy and painful yoke, but by bearing it Himself; not by ordering for us violent remedies, but by taking for Himself their bitterness and applying to us all their efficacy. O sacred Name of Jesus, which is truly "an oil poured out" (Cant. I, 2), to heal our wounds and impart health to our souls; for who can think of this divine Name without representing to himself, at the same time, the perfect model and union of all the virtues in the most eminent degree, in the person of Jesus. Imprint, then, Thy holy Name in our minds, in our hearts and on our lips, O Lord Jesus, and grant us in this name grace to imitate Thee, and to learn of Thee, not to create new worlds, but to obey, to suffer, and to humble ourselves (St. Aug.).

January 3rd.

Christ's humiliations in the circumcision.

I. POINT.

Jesus, in His birth, was like other men, naked, weak and helpless; but as if this was too little for His love, He abased Himself still more in His circumcision; He wished to bear our sins before God, His Father, and, although He had only the appearance of sin (Rom. VIII, 3), to subject Himself to a law, which regarded only real sinners. Admirable counsel of the goodness of God! We have fallen into nothingness by sin, and He chose to descend even to this nothingness in order to deliver us (St. Bernard). Profound and surprising humiliation of the supreme Majesty, who elevates us by His abasement! Incomprehensible excess of the charity of God, by which He loved us and raised us to life by Jesus Christ, when we were dead by sin! (Ephes. II, 5).

II. POINT.

Of all the humiliations which Jesus chose to undergo during His mortal life, the most extraordinary and remarkable were the Circumcision and the Cross. In the former He was treated as a sinner among the children of Adam; and in the latter He was reputed as a malefactor among criminals and the wicked (Is. LIII, 12). But, we may say in a certain sense, that the Circumcision was more humiliating to Him than the Cross; for the Circumcision, being a remedy for sin and suitable only to sinners, Jesus, the Holy of holies, could not submit to it without degrading Himself, so to speak, and without infinitely abasing Himself. On the other hand, the Cross was not the infallible mark of sin, and it might easily happen, as in fact it often did, that a just and innocent man should be made to undergo that torture: for this the malice or ignorance of men would suffice. O Jesus, holy, just and innocent, how couldst Thou resolve to bear the confusion due to sin? And, after that, will the sinner seek to escape the shame of his sin, will he affect to pass for a just man? O my God, may Thy profound humility destroy my pride! Render me penitent and humble with Thee by the merits of Thy inconceivable abasement.

III. POINT.

Jesus wished to submit to circumcision in order to put an end to this legal ceremony, and to substitute for it the evangelical circumcision, which is much more excellent. The old circumcision was coarse and corporal, that of the Christian is interior and spiritual (Rom. II, 26); the first cut off only a small portion of the body, the other removes all that is inordinate in the soul; it extends to all the passions and affections of the heart, to all the senses and faculties of body and mind,

in a word, to all in man that is opposed to God. The second motive of Jesus, in His circumcision, was to make satisfaction for our sins to the divine justice, offering to it His own body in sacrifice. The third and principal motive was to render homage to His Father and to honor His sovereign dominion by taking upon Himself the yoke of the Law, thus repairing the pride and disobedience of Adam by His humble submission. Although He was the Son of God, says St. Paul, and equal in all things to His Father, He learned obedience (Heb. III, 7). Grant, O Lord, that we may learn from Thy example that obedience and that exact accomplishment of Thy precepts, by which Thou hast rendered "Thy yoke sweet and Thy burden light" (Mat. XI, 30).

January 4th.

Spiritual Circumcision.

I. POINT.

If we were to celebrate the mystery of the Circumcision worthily, it would communicate to us the strength to circumcise ourselves spiritually in many ways. The first circumcision is made in our senses, in our appetites and in all the faculties of the inferior part of our being by the knife of mortification, which removes from our eyes all curious looks; from our ears, from the tongue and from the other members all the attractions that could lead them to sin. "Lord, turn away mine eyes from vain things" (Ps. CXVIII, 37), said the prophet; "set a watch guard before my mouth, and a door round about my lips" (Ps. CXL, 3); and again: "I became as a deaf man that heareth not, and as a dumb man not opening his mouth" (Ps. XXXVII, 15). O Jesus, mortify and circumcise my senses; control, correct and sanctify all my senses by the merit of the most holy use Thou didst make of Thine.

II. POINT.

The second circumcision ought to be made in the will, separating and detaching our hearts from irregular desires, from all earthly and human affections, that, being perfectly detached and purified, we may be able to unite ourselves to God by an entire submission and perfect conformity of our will to His. An ancient Father, being asked where God is, answered: "Where we are not." Thus we may say that the love of God is, and is found, where our self-love is no longer found, and that His holy will reigns and is accomplished, where ours is destroyed and annihilated. The third circumcision is made in the mind, cutting off all interior pride, good opinion of self, presumption, and attachment to our own views, by renunciation of our lights and by the low estimate of what we are. O Jesus, destroy and put to death in me "the old man" (Ephes. IV, 22), with all his corrupt and irregular inclinations; but do Thou live and reign in me forever.

III. POINT.

The holy Child, being circumcised, was called Jesus (Luke II, 21). If we are circumcised from all affection and desire for created things, this divine name will make us feel its virtue efficaciously, and will render us worthy of being the disciples of Jesus; for whoever, says He, does not renounce all things, cannot be My disciple. But as soon as we leave all, we find all, and in stripping ourselves of the world which is in us, we clothe ourselves with Jesus, the source of all true goods. "Thy name", said the spouse to Him, is a balm, or "oil poured out" (Cant. I, 2); but Jesus fills hearts with this salutary oil of His holy love, only when they are empty of self-love; and the divine liquor of grace is checked and ceases to flow, when there still remains

in these vessels some earthly and profane affection (St. Bernard). O Jesus, take away and replace, empty my heart of all that is not for Thee, and fill it with Thy grace, Thy virtues and Thy holy love.

January 5th.

The flight into Egypt.

I. POINT.

The glory of Jesus at His birth, manifested by a miraculous star in the East, had spread to Jerusalem by the arrival of the Magi, who went there to seek publicly the King of the Jews; it had filled all Judea, in consequence of the inquiries and researches of Herod to discover the new King; it had even penetrated beyond, by the way of the innocent blood, which this impious monarch had shed, with the design of mingling with it that of the new-born King, whose weakness, more powerful than His strength, made Herod tremble even on his throne. The glory of Jesus had shone forth especially, in a manner worthy of God, by the sacred concert of the angels, who had celebrated His praises in the highest heavens, and had announced Him to men upon earth; but Jesus, who wished to teach us early to flee from the false glare of worldly greatness, withdrew from all the bright lights which revealed His majesty; and as soon as His Father had permitted some rays of it to attract adorers, He concealed Himself from their homage; He changed His abode, He withdrew and fled into Egypt, as He afterwards hid Himself from those who wished to make Him king (John VI, 15). Let us flee with Jesus from this deceitful world; let us despise the false happiness which it presents to us; let us not be seduced by the vain ideas, the chimerical charms with which it seeks to dazzle us; but let us say with Jesus and His prophet: "I have chosen to be an abject

in the house of the Lord, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners" (Ps. LXXXIII, 11).

II. POINT.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph remained in Egypt, poor, unknown, despised, deprived of all the comforts of life; they spent several years there, gaining their living by the labor of their hands. Jesus, not satisfied with the humiliation of His flight, wished, as it were, to efface from the remembrance of men all the wonders which had begun to make Him known. Where, then, is the Christian who will not desire to live poor and abandoned with Jesus, and who will not say to Him with all his heart, with David: "One day in Thy house, O my God, is better than a thousand" anywhere else (Ps. LXXXIII, 11). Jesus, by His presence, changed this profane earth into a terrestrial paradise. He cast into it a seed of grace and holiness, which later rendered the deserts fruitful and peopled them with millions of anchorites. These generous penitents, following the steps of Jesus and filled with His spirit, understood the science of the saints, trampled the world under foot, and preferred the neglect and contempt of men to all that they might have expected or hoped from their favor. Give to my soul, O my Saviour, all that is necessary to make it love to live for Thee and with Thee, hidden and unknown upon earth, since it is to them who seek to be known by Thee alone, that Thou dost communicate Thyself, and for them that Thou dost prepare Thy kingdom.

III. POINT.

"Arise", said the angel to Joseph: "take the Child and His Mother, and return into the land of Israel" (Mat. II, 20). Jesus, true God, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge" of God (Col. II, 3), who sees equally things present and things

future (Eccli. XLII, 19), abandons Himself, as if He knew nothing, to the care and guidance of His holy Mother. Let us adore this abasement of God beneath His creature; this submission and obedience, the most humble that ever was, to which Jesus chose to reduce Himself for love of us, and by which we learn to render ourselves subject to all creatures for love of Him (1 Pet. II, 13). Mary imitates Jesus, and Joseph follows the example of Mary: both obey the angel without reply or delay. O blessed angel, since thou hast been appointed by God to lead Jesus into Egypt and to bring Him back, exercise thy office, introduce and guide Jesus into Egypt, that is, into our sinful souls, inspiring them with a sincere repentance, and bring Him back to Israel, to make them holy souls by a new satisfaction, uniting them intimately with Him. O glorious spirit, give our souls to Jesus, that He may possess them entirely and forever.

January 6th.

Feast of the Epiphany.

I. POINT.

“Father, glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son may glorify Thee” (John XVII, 1), said Jesus to His Father. It is this glory, which He gives to Himself to-day, enlightening the obscurity of His birth by a miraculous star, which guides sovereigns to His feet. He did this also when He exalted the opprobrium of His cross by the title which declared Him “King of the Jews” (John XIX, 19), and by so many wonders which accompanied His death. The Epiphany of Jesus gives splendor to His birth, which would have been of little profit to us, if it had remained hidden; for the graces of God are beneficial only in proportion as they are known, acknowledged and applied; and the knowledge of Jesus

is the source of all grace, the cause of all our happiness. To-day the first public worship is rendered to Him, the first homage is offered to Him in the name of all men, and the firstlings of the Gentiles are consecrated to Him. O God, great in what is lowest, glorious in swaddling-clothes, adorable in the crib! There we render to Thee our homage with these holy kings; animate us with zeal for Thy glory, that we may say with Thee: "Holy Father, glorify Thy Son," and render us also worthy to glorify Him with Thee and through Thee.

II. POINT.

Jesus in the crib, bound and wrapped in swaddling-clothes, attracts all things to Himself (John XII, 32). He causes the angels to descend from the heavens; He calls the shepherds from Judea; by the exterior apparition of a star, and, at the same time, by the interior attraction of grace, He calls from the East the Magi, who come to His cradle, more by the affections of the heart than by the steps of the body. They follow the star that guides them, they co-operate with the grace that enlightens them; as soon as this two-fold light illuminates them, they obey, without hesitation or delay, the voice of God, who calls them: "We have seen His star," say they, "and we have come to adore Him" (Mat. II, 2). The charity and love of Jesus pressed them; an example for us of a holy fervor and of a two-fold obedience, the one to the voice and guidance of superiors, and the other to the inspirations and motions of the Holy Ghost; for grace does not know how to make long delays and tardy efforts. O Jesus, who wast already conceived in their hearts, and who didst wish to be born in them by the ardor of their search, inspire us with the same desires and give us the grace to find Thee.

III. POINT.

The Magi manifested a faith, lively, courageous and magnanimous, with a very high esteem for Jesus, so that, seeing Him as yet only with the eyes of faith, they abandoned their homes, their country and their possessions; they practised the evangelical counsel by leaving all, not to follow Jesus pronouncing oracles or working miracles, but to seek Him an Infant, by a journey, long, dangerous, and uncertain, at least according to the views of human wisdom. Their faith rendered them intrepid, and they asked boldly in the face of the usurper: Where is the lawful Prince, "He who is born King of the Jews?" Finally, they were not discouraged by the extreme poverty of this new-born King; but under the obscure clouds of His humble infancy, they recognized Him and adored Him (Mat. II, 11) as their King and their Lord. O triumph of Jesus, newly born! By Thy humility triumph over us, O Lord, and over all the pride of the world in us.

January 7th.

What the journey of the Magi represents to us, and in what we should imitate them.

I. POINT.

"Wise men came from the East to Jerusalem."

(Mat. II, 1.)

What does this journey, under the guidance of the miraculous star, signify, if not the passage that we make, directed by the light of faith, from sin to grace, from ourselves to Jesus, from self-love to the love of God, from the multiplicity of creatures to the "one thing necessary"? (Luke X, 42). This journey represents to us also a continual progress in the way of God, because from the East, or the beginning of our conversion, we should never stop, or look back, but always

advance, renewing ourselves and growing in fervor and grace, after the example of the Magi; for not to advance is to go back, says St. Bernard. O Lord, who art the end of our journey, grant that we may walk in the way of Thy holy will, and that we may run therein without stopping, so that we may win the prize, destined for those who advance in Thy holy love until its perfection and entire consummation in heaven.

II. POINT.

“Where is He who is born King of the Jews?” (Mat. II, 2). Grace was necessary to the Magi to seek Jesus. “No one”, says He, “can come to Me, unless My Father draw him” (John VI, 44). No one can conceive a true desire to seek Jesus, and still less seek Him really, but by the motion of His grace. It was this powerful grace, which so efficaciously attracted the Magi to seek Jesus, that, persevering in their search, they might esteem this precious gift more highly, and their desires always increasing, they might better deserve to find Him. God often delays to grant us what He most desires to give us, in order to make us desire it more ardently, and to render us more worthy to receive it.

III. POINT.

“Jesus”, says St. John, “was in the world, and the world knew Him not” (John I, 10). He came unto His own inheritance, and His own, far from seeking Him when He appeared in the midst of them, did not even receive Him. The Magi, on the contrary, to whom Jesus did not come, sought Him, and they received the light and grace, which the Jews rejected and to which they closed their eyes. A just judgment of God, terrible and merciful at the same time, which should render us attentive to this admonition: “Hold fast that

which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Apoc. III, 11); and to this threat of Jesus: "Therefore, I say to you, that the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and shall be given to a nation yielding the fruits thereof" (Mat. XXI, 43). They only find Him who, receiving His grace, correspond to it faithfully. O inestimable riches of the goodness of God, O sweet advances of His mercy, which we ought to guard carefully and cultivate vigilantly.

January 8th.

How, after the example of the Magi, we ought to seek Jesus.

I. POINT.

"Entering into the house, they found the Child with Mary, His Mother" (Mat. II, 11.)

"Ask and you shall receive," said our Lord, "seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you" (Luke XI, 9). The Magi perfectly accomplished these three things. First, they asked: "Where is He, who is born King of the Jews?" And what they asked for was given to them. We ought then to lift up our voices, and, trusting in the promise of our Lord, "Ask and you shall receive", we should cry to Him from the bottom of our hearts in prayer: I have lifted up my soul to Thee, my God; I put my confidence in Thee, therefore I will not blush; "for all they that wait on Thee, shall not be confounded" (Ps. XXIV, 3). But what must we ask of God, but God Himself? My soul hath an ardent thirst for the living God (Ps. XLI, 3). What must we ask of the Father? His only-begotten Son. And of Mary? The blessed Fruit of her chaste womb, which can be given in His infancy only by her; for, as a mother, she has the right and power to give Him and manifest Him to the world. O Blessed Virgin, obtain, by thy powerful intercession, that we may know

and love thy Son here below; show Him to us after this exile, that we may possess Him, see Him and contemplate Him in the land of the living.

II. POINT.

The Wise Men sought, and they found; urged by an ardent desire, they came from a distant country, from the East to Jerusalem and even to Bethlehem; and, finally, they found the object of their eager search, —Jesus, the sovereign Lord and King. Thus we should seek Jesus diligently and by the fervent desires of pure love, which is a disposition inseparable from good prayer. Grant by Thy grace, O Lord, that in meditation this divine fire may be kindled in my heart; inflame me with Thy holy love, and may I say to Thee: “My soul panteth after Thee” (Ps. XLI, 1). May I seek Thee, O Lord, and may I desire Thee, with the Magi, as my King; subject to Thyself all the powers of my soul and reign in me forever.

III. POINT.

Finally, the Magi knocked, and it was opened to them, Thus we ought to knock by efficacious resolutions, by good works, by the practice of all the virtues. We ought not only to ask and to seek, but also to knock, that is, to labor, to pray with earnestness, importunity and perseverance; we should, as our Lord says, always pray and never cease. O efficacious and powerful prayer which is made by good works! O Lord, who dost remain at the door of our hearts and dost knock, enter, we implore Thee, deprive us not of the graces which Thou didst come to merit for us, and reject us not when we shall knock at the door of Thy mercy; deign to receive us; hide us in the secrecy of Thy sacred tabernacles in the days of Thy anger, and never permit us to be separated from Thee.

January 9th.

The Word hidden in the bosom of God, under the veil of human nature,
and in the womb of Mary.

I. POINT.

Jesus has three abodes in which He is called a "hidden God" (Is. XLV, 15), and in which we ought to seek Him with the Magi, to offer Him our most profound adoration. He was first hidden from all eternity in the bosom of the Father; and if we ask: "Where is He, who is born" God of God, light of light, true God of true God, "by whom all things were made" (John I, 3), St. John will answer: "The only-begotten Son is in the bosom of the Father" (John I, 18). Considering Him thus in His eternal generation, we ought to offer the incense of a respectful adoration to His supreme majesty and to His almighty power; the myrrh of an humble thanksgiving to His supreme wisdom; the gold of a sincere love of preference over all things to His infinite goodness. O Jesus, our God, who dost dwell in light inaccessible, in the bosom of God, Thy Father, deign there to receive our prayers; we render thanks to Thee for Thy great glory; there we adore Thee and love Thee.

II. POINT.

The second abode of the Son of God was His holy humanity, in which He contained and hid the "fulness" and "all the treasures" of His divinity (Col. II, 3); let us seek Him, then, and say: Where is He who comes to save us? The same St. John answers: "The Word was made flesh" (John I, 14). Let us present to Him our offerings; to His most holy soul, the incense of an entire abnegation of ourselves; to His most pure body, the myrrh of a general mortification of our senses; to His Sacred Heart, the gold of an entire renunciation of

all creatures and an unchangeable attachment to His service. Receive, O Jesus, God hidden and made man for my salvation, the oblation and sacrifice which I venture to offer Thee of my mind, my body and my heart.

III. POINT.

The third abode of Jesus was in the chaste womb of His most pure Mother; and if you ask: "Where is He who is born King of the Jews?" the angel will answer you: He is in Mary: what is born in her, says he, is the work of the Holy Ghost (Mat. I, 20). In her womb, or in her arms, we must seek Him; there we shall find Him; let us offer the incense of divine honor and of a sovereign reverence to the ineffable and admirable life of Jesus, hidden in Mary or in the stable with Mary; the myrrh of our humiliations and our voluntary abasement to Jesus, so marvellously annihilated for us; and the gold of a tender and special affection for Jesus and Mary, in this state so humble for the one, so exalted for the other. O Jesus, who art truly a hidden God, allow Thyself to be found by my heart, which seeks Thee alone, and may my heart, as a victim of love, be received by Thee, in the odor of sweetness.

January 10th.

Worship rendered to the Divine Infant by the Magi.

I. POINT.

*"Falling down they adored Him, and offered Him gifts."
(Mat. II, 11.)*

The Magi, prostrating themselves at the feet of Jesus, humble not so much their bodies as their minds and their hearts; they give themselves to Him by an entire and perfect devotion of their whole will; they abandon and deliver themselves to Him, to be entirely subjected to the power of His Spirit. How desirable it

is to be received and possessed by Jesus in this life, in order to possess Him in the next; for it is the property of grace to make us merit the possession of Jesus, and the property of heavenly glory to introduce us into the possession of Jesus, as our inheritance, our treasure and our great reward (Gen. XV, 14). Jesus receives the Magi; He receives them among the number of His subjects; and, in proportion as they humble themselves before Him, He fills them with joy and consolation, and raises them above themselves and all human greatness; He renders them truly kings, and in subjecting them to His authority, He makes them feel that to serve Him is to reign. O Jesus, new-born King of the Jews, and recognized on this day as King of all nations, reign absolutely over them: may the whole universe be subject to Thee, may all its monarchs and potentates seek all their glory in serving Thee alone!

II. POINT.

The Magi, by their public adoration, as by a supreme act of religion, recognize Jesus not only as King, but as true God and Saviour of the world; they adore, wrapped in swaddling-clothes and crying in a manger, Him, whom the Jews rejected when He was working miracles. O holy Magi, how great is your faith, since Jesus found "none so great in Israel"! (Mat. VIII, 10). By their faith they believed and recognized a supreme and divine majesty in this Infant, and, enlightened by light from on high, they confessed the mystery of the Word incarnate for the salvation of men. What effects did this lively faith produce in them, and what may it not accomplish in our souls? With them we acknowledge Thee, we believe in Thee and we adore Thee, O most holy Child, as our God and the sovereign ruler of heaven and earth, to whom alone are due glory and adoration throughout all ages.

III. POINT.

“They offered Him gifts.” If we offer something to God, we receive much more than we give. “Thou art my God,” said David, “and Thou hast no need of my goods” (Ps. XV, 2). If, then, He inspires us with the will to give to Him, it is in order to recompense our offerings a hundred-fold, although they are made with His own gifts. But since God became poor for us and with us, He made Himself needy, and wishes to receive from us. O Jesus, who didst become poor to enrich us with Thy poverty, what doest Thou ask of me but my heart? Give me grace to offer it to Thee with all that I am and all that I have: vouchsafe by Thy mercy to receive my offering.

January 11th.

To desire Jesus Christ for His own sake, and to seek Him with perseverance.

I. POINT.

“We have seen His star and we have come to adore Him.”

(Mat. II, 2.)

A strange thing! Many seek Jesus without finding Him. “You shall seek Me,” He Himself says, “and you shall not find Me” (John VII, 36); because we seek Jesus, not for Jesus, but to obtain from Him some temporal favor, as formerly the Jews sought Him through curiosity “to see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead” (John XII, 9). The Magi, on the contrary, seek Him, only to adore Him, to know Him, to love Him, to render Him sovereign homage, and to manifest Him to the world; therefore they found Him and, with Him, His most abundant and precious favors. But how greatly should we fear to seek Him ill, and, by a just judgment, not to find Him. We seek Him by desires, we find Him by a will strong, efficacious, and really

followed by effects; for hell is full of good desires, says St. Bernard, and they only who produce good works, penetrate into heaven.

II. POINT.

Jesus is the most excellent object that we can contemplate, the most precious treasure that we can desire, the most perfect good that we can love and esteem. Jesus merits to be sought for, and His possession would be secured at too low a price, if we should purchase it at the cost of all the labors, all the pains, all the sufferings, not only of this life, but even of the next; although they should be endured, not for a few years only, but to the end of ages. What, then, should be our occupation while we are on earth? To sigh continually for Jesus, to tend to Him without intermission, to inquire of all creatures the means to be united to Him forever, to say and to repeat unceasingly with the spouse: "Have you not seen Him whom my soul loveth?" (Cant. III, 3). Or with the Magi: "Where is He who is born King" of our hearts? Happy he, who thus seeks Jesus, and who, having sought Him with ardor during life, is worthy to find Him at the moment of death. O most desirable Jesus, kindle in me the wish to seek Thee; grant me the grace to despise all the things of this world, and, with Thy apostle, to regard them as filth and dust, in order to find Thee, to obtain Thee, and to possess Thee (Phil. III, 7) forever.

III. POINT.

Jesus is the evangelical treasure, hidden in the field of the Father of the family. He was first hidden in the virginal womb of Mary. "Thou art a garden enclosed" (Cant. IV, 12). Thou art a paradise of holy delights, O Blessed Virgin, thou, in whom was hidden the treasure of the world. This treasure is so rich, that

the man who has found it ought to sell all that he has to purchase it (Mat. XIII, 44). Therefore, so many saints have abandoned all, and esteemed the whole world as nothing, to seek and find Jesus. The Magi found Him with Mary, His Mother, and it is by the intercession of this merciful Mother, and with her help, that we should seek Him and shall be able to find Him. O Mary, Mother of grace, by thee may we have free access to thy Son, under thy protection may we go with confidence to the throne of His grace, to obtain mercy and receive the effects of His goodness at all times, but especially in the last moments of our life.

Sunday in the Octave of the Epiphany.

Exact observance of the divine law, of which Christ gives us a remarkable example.

I. POINT.

“They went up to Jerusalem, according to the custom of the feast” (Luke II, 42).

It was the custom of Jesus, of Mary and Joseph, to walk unswervingly in the exact observance of the law. Jesus Christ, the sovereign King and Law-giver, wished to subject Himself to it. It was suitable, said He Himself, that He should thus accomplish all justice (Mat. III, 15); this was His first motive. Moreover, it was necessary that the Master of virtues should teach them to us by His example, especially that of obedience, so opposed to the pride of man. But what shall we think of this much more surprising submission, which He rendered to Mary and Joseph? “He was subject to them,” says the evangelist (Luke II, 51). A short sentence, which contains instruction for our whole life, since it denotes the occupation of the whole life of a God. “Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” (Luke II, 49) was His first answer

to the complaint of Mary; and, without insisting further, He followed them to Nazareth. It was by obeying, it was by concealing Himself for so long a period, still more than by preaching, that He procured the glory of His Father, since actions and examples move and persuade far more than words. What is the object of this obedience, so praiseworthy in the eyes of God? What is the end of this hidden life, which the Son of God Himself chose for His portion? He wished to sanctify and cause us to love this state so proper, so suitable for our salvation.

II. POINT.

“They sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintances” (Luke II, 44). We do not find Jesus in the midst of the noise and tumult of the world; we do not find Him among our relatives scattered throughout the world, and to whom we are bound by earthly ties and employments; there Mary sought Him in vain. How then could we dare to expect to find Him amidst the sweetness and consolations of flesh and blood? I am come, said He, to bring the sword and separation; “he that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me” (Mat. X, 37). It is in recollection, silence and retreat that Jesus is found; we must seek Him with a heart purified from earthly affections. O Lord, whatever it may cost, detach and separate my heart from all that is not Thyself.

III. POINT.

“They found Jesus in the temple” (Luke II, 46). Where should the God of holiness dwell, except in His temple? “The Lord is in His holy temple,” said David; “the Lord hath His throne in heaven” (Ps. X, 5). He is in heaven by the manifestation of His glory; He is in His temple by the pouring forth of His mercies. He is

in heaven present to the saints, in the splendor of His brilliant light and in the enjoyment of His sovereign good, which is Himself; He is here below, veiled and hidden in the Most Blessed Sacrament, where we possess Him in reality, with the desire and hope of a more perfect possession, which we look for in the future life. He is in heaven, glorifying the blessed; He is here below sanctifying our souls. Let us seek Him in our churches, let us find our happiness in remaining at His feet during the exile of this life, that we may find Him glorious in the heavenly country.

January 13th, Octave of the Epiphany.

Three abodes in which we should seek Christ, and offer Him gifts with the Magi.

I. POINT.

Jesus has three exterior abodes, in which we ought to seek Him. The first in Bethlehem, where we find Him with the Magi, favorable to our desires, since He is there only for us. He refuses a palace and even a cradle on earth, only to teach us that He wills to have no abode but our hearts; this is the first gift that we ought to offer Him, beseeching Him to render them worthy of Himself. Let us afterwards offer the incense of a public confession of His divinity, the myrrh of an humble acknowledgment of His abasement in our humanity, and in the likeness to us which He took upon Himself; and the gold of our submission to His supreme authority. These are the acts and the sentiments represented by the gifts of the Magi, who offered Him incense as to their God, myrrh as to a man, and gold as to their King.

II. POINT.

The second retreat or exterior solitude in which Jesus is truly "a hidden God" (Is. XLV, 15), is the

cross upon which He suffers and dies, bearing the title of King of the Jews. On the cross we shall find Him, not wrapped in swaddling-clothes, but fastened with nails; not in the arms of His Mother, but surrounded by executioners, and hanging as a criminal. Let us offer to Him in this state the incense of an attentive contemplation, the myrrh of a deep compassion and of a heart broken with bitter sorrow, and finally the gold of a grateful love and of an unchanging attachment, which will make us desire to suffer with Him and for Him. O Jesus, vouchsafe to receive me and hide me in the opening of Thy sacred wounds.

III. POINT.

The third abode of Jesus in which He conceals not only His divine essence with all the splendor and glory of His majesty, but also His most holy humanity, is the blessed Eucharist. "Where is He who is born," who suffered, who died, and who reigns in heaven? Let us answer with Jacob: "Truly He is here, and I knew it not" (Gen. XXVIII, 16), or I thought not of it. God is here with us; He is on the holy altar in the midst of us; there He becomes the companion of our pilgrimage and the consolation of our exile. Let us go, then, to visit Him, let us go to consult Him in our trials and perplexities, let us render to Him our homage and our respect, let us offer to Him the incense of a lively faith, the myrrh of a true compunction and a sincere humility, at the sight of His greatness, of our nothingness and of our sins; the gold of a pure love, of an ardent devotion and of a renewed fervor. O Jesus, I adore Thee, I believe Thou art truly and really present in Thy August Sacrament, look upon me from this throne of holiness, and have pity on me.

January 14th.**Fidelity to the divine inspirations.****I. POINT.**

Being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, "they went back by another way" (Mat. II, 12). The Magi were interiorly guided by Jesus, they did not consult their own views and their own wisdom; but seeking only the glory of Jesus and the accomplishment of His will, they were taught by Him what they ought to do. The lights and the assistance of His grace are never wanting to us: the Lord takes care of me, said David, I shall want nothing (Ps, XXII). O Jesus, supremely wise in Thy infancy, possess my soul, command my will, guide my thoughts, "direct my steps" (Psalm CXVIII, 133), rule my words, make me walk in Thy presence (Ps. V, 9), "teach me to do Thy will, since Thou art my God" (Ps. CXLII, 10).

II. POINT.

"They returned by another way." The Magi, docile to grace, followed its inspirations faithfully, and this is the fruit which they derived from it. They took another way and were changed into other men. Animated with this new spirit, with this new heart, which Jesus had just given them according to His promise: I will pour My spirit upon you, "I will give you a new heart" (Ezech. XXXVI, 26), they began a new life. They had been great and wise according to the world, and they returned humble disciples of Jesus Christ; they changed their manners, their occupations, their conduct, to conform in everything to the new Master, whom they had chosen; they caused Him to triumph gloriously in them and by them over the Gentiles, over profane wisdom, the pride of the world and all its vain greatness, proclaiming His coming and His kingdom upon earth, and establishing His maxims.

III. POINT.

If we have found Jesus, if He has subjected our hearts by grace, if entering them by holy Communion, He has established His abode there; if we have recognized Him as our King, we should return with the Magi by another way: with changed hearts, with new desires, new thoughts and different aims. We should no longer be the same as before; but meekness, humility, patience, charity, and all the virtues of Jesus Christ, should take the place of our sinful habits; we ought to be penetrated with His maxims, clothed with His inclinations, submissive to His will. Remain not in the likeness of the spirit of the world, says St. Paul, but be ye transformed by the renewal of your mind (Rom. XII, 2). Our soul becomes a victim pleasing to God, when by the fire of His love, losing the form that she had received from the world, and moulding herself according to God, as to the unchanging form of all good, she changes and transforms herself entirely into Him. O Jesus, who by Thy birth didst take a new life, and who wast born to renew the world, "create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me" (Ps. L, 12).

January 15th.

Mary's sorrow in seeking Jesus, and His submission.

I. POINT.

"Jesus remained at Jerusalem" (Luke II, 43).

Jesus, in His tender youth, gives us a powerful example of leaving father and mother, house and country and all things, to follow Him. If He separated from His Mother, more holy than all creatures together; if, to obey then the orders of His Father, He left her, without regarding her sweetness and her tears, what ought not we to abandon for Him? It was then, that

according to the prophecy of Simon, the sword of sorrow began to pierce the heart of Mary (Luke II, 35). This loss had not befallen her by her own fault, but by the counsel of God, who afflicts and tries for a time those whom He loves (Heb. XII, 2). The innocent Mary is, in this mystery, the model of a penitent soul, who, in imitation of her, should conceive a lively sorrow for having lost Jesus, and who should groan so much the more, as she has lost Him by her own fault for a vain and fleeting pleasure. We ought then to seek Him in the bitterness of a contrite heart and by the labor of penance; we ought to seek Him with Mary in the temple, with tears of compunction and love, true repentance being the hatred of sin and the love of God. O holy Virgin, imprint these dispositions in my heart by Thy intercession and merits.

II. POINT.

“They found Him in the midst of the doctors, who were astonished at His wisdom and at His answers” (Luke II, 47). Jesus in this mystery reveals some traits of the profound knowledge which was hidden in Him. During the whole course of His life He concealed His divine power under the shadows of human weakness, and His glory under the veils of a passible flesh; and if He allowed some sparks to gleam forth in His Transfiguration, if He showed the effect of His power by His miracles, it was because the accomplishment of His designs made it necessary. Thus the treasures of His wisdom were concealed beneath the covering of His childhood and His hidden life. And now, on this day, His wisdom allows itself to be dimly seen, and by its first rays astonishes and dazzles the eyes of the doctors of the law. O holy Child Jesus, uncreated Wisdom,

“Light of the world” (John VIII, 12), “Sun of Justice” (Mal. IV, 2), what will it be when we shall see Thee openly in the splendor of Thy glory, when we shall know Thee, as we ourselves are known? (1 Cor. XIII, 12). O summit of happiness, O abyss of felicity!

III. POINT.

“Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” (Luke II, 49). Jesus had come to accomplish the will of His Father in the work of our salvation; this was His food and His life: “I have a meat to eat,” said He to His disciples, “that you know not; My meat is to do the will of Him who sent Me, that I may perfect His work” (John IV, 34). Though heaven and earth should be overthrown, though all the angels and men should be destroyed, “the word of God remaineth forever” (1 Pet. I, 23); His will must be accomplished, whatever it may cost. We should, then, after the example of our divine Model, remain constantly faithful to our vocation; this is what St. Paul said to the first Christians: let every man follow His vocation (1 Cor. VII, 20), that is, let each one serve God according to the attraction and the gift which he has received from Him. O my Saviour, I am born only for this end. Let the world cry out, let flesh and blood rebel, I must remain firm and immovable in the vocation to which it has pleased Thee to call me. May I fulfil all its duties, may I correspond to Thy grace throughout my life, if I wish to merit a place among Thy elect throughout eternity.

January 16th.

Obligation to advance in the ways of God.

I. POINT.

*Jesus advanced in wisdom, in age and grace before
God and men (Luke II, 40).*

This is not to be understood as if the virtue of Jesus

could receive any increase: He could not grow in grace, since He possessed its fulness; for "God did not give Him His spirit by measure" (John III, 34), and He had no less wisdom, or rather He was no less Wisdom itself in His conception than in His birth, and in His most tender years than in His more advanced age. But because He gave more striking marks of His wisdom by all that He did for His Father before men, it is said that He advanced, as it is said of the sun, that it grows and becomes stronger as it rises above the horizon, although it undergoes no real change and only shows its light more fully. Jesus increased in grace before God and men, when, according to the testimony of Scripture, He passed through all the cities and provinces instructing the people, healing the sick and doing good to all (Mat. IV, 23). O Jesus, divine Sun, who dost rise upon us, render us worthy to receive more and more the rays of Thy bright light and the efficacious and sweet influences of Thy grace.

II. POINT.

What is said in an improper sense of the Son of God, that He advanced in wisdom, should be said in a proper sense of us, who ought always to advance and grow more and more in virtue and good works. "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord," writes St. Peter (2 Peter III, 18); labor to perfect the virtues which you have acquired, and to acquire those in which you are deficient. We see in nature that plants, which cease to grow after they are taken from the earth, soon die; in like manner, if our virtue does not grow, let us fear that it is without roots and solid foundation, and, consequently, that it will soon disappear. Never imagine that you have made sufficient progress, says St. Augustine; but always endeavor to become more perfect:

for whatever point you may have attained, as soon as you stop, being satisfied with yourself, you begin to fall away and to go back.

III. POINT.

Let us, then, grow up in Jesus Christ, who is our Head (Eph. IV, 15). If we do not advance in charity as we advance in years, we should fear that we are not walking in His steps, and that we are not members well proportioned to the august Head of the faithful. He ran with ardor as a giant; His course was from the highest heavens (Ps. XVIII, 6); He did not pause in His course. He who professes to dwell in Jesus Christ, must walk as He did, and follow the way which He opened for us (1 John II, 6); however long your course may be, if you do not continue to the end, you will not win the crown. Remember that you are a traveler, and that you are going to eternity; therefore walk quickly. The just, says David, should in this valley of tears advance from virtue to virtue, until they see the God of gods upon Mount Sion (Ps. LXXXIII, 8). Ascend towards God by loving Him. St. Augustine says, the more you love Him, the more you will advance towards Him. O Lord, draw us and we will run in Thy steps (Cant. I, 3). I love Thee, but grant that I may love Thee more. O love, that burnest always and art never extinguished, my God, Thou who art charity itself, kindle in my heart this divine fire, may it enable me to run in the way of Thy commandments.

January 17th.

Interior and spiritual sacrifice of ourselves to God.

I. POINT.

*I conjure you, my brethren, by the mercy of God,
to offer your bodies to Him as living victims,
holy and acceptable in His sight.*

(Rom. XII, 1.)

As Jesus Christ, from the moment of His Incarna-

tion, sacrificed and offered Himself perpetually to His Father for us, so that His priesthood is called "perpetual" (Heb. VII, 24), thus St. Paul wishes that all of us, who have been baptized in the blood and by the death of Jesus Christ (Rom. VI, 3), should live henceforth only in Him and for Him, because it is in this that our sacrifice properly consists. Thus we offer to Him a living victim, we immolate to Him our bodies and our lives, no longer employing them for profane uses, that is, for ourselves, but for the glory and love of Him from whose liberality we hold all. Our sacrifice, to imitate that of Jesus, must continue always, even unto death. It is unworthy of Him and cannot please Him, if it wants the stamp of perpetuity, for the Lord does not love those who are inconstant in their ways; and, as He is always the same and does not change (Mat. III, 6), He wishes our sacrifice and our attachment to Him to be unchanging and without regret.

II. POINT.

St. Paul requires that our sacrifice should be holy, that is, free from all spot and all stain of sin. Thine eyes are pure, O my God, they cannot behold evil, and to offer Thee an impure victim, would be to offend Thee and not to appease Thee. Therefore, early in the morning I will consider in Thy presence, that Thou art a God who cannot bear iniquity (Ps. V, 5). Thou hatest all them that commit it, and the unjust shall not subsist before Thee. "Be ye holy, because I am holy, saith the Lord" (Levit. XIX, 2). The will of God is that you be holy, says St. Paul (1 Thess. IV, 3). The same apostle requires also that our sacrifice should be agreeable to God, to show that the end of all our actions ought to be to please this supreme Being. O Lord, do Thou Thyself purify the victim

which is to be offered to Thee; wash it in Thy precious blood; render it holy, that it may be worthy of Thee, that it may be pleasing to Thee and may glorify Thee in all things.

III. POINT.

Finally, we offer to God a reasonable and spiritual worship, when to the desire and the continual attention to please Him we unite a life entirely composed of a long series of holy actions; this is the sacrifice and oblation of a living victim, holy and pleasing in the sight of the Lord, according to the saying of the Wise Man. He, who keeps the Law, multiplies oblations; and, as it is said elsewhere in more formal terms: The most salutary sacrifice is to observe the commandments of God, and to withdraw from all iniquity. This is that heavenly will which St. Paul wishes us to know (Rom. XII, 2), that we may learn to sacrifice our own; this is the perfection of our sacrifice, which would not be entire, if it did not include the heart and the will; for God demands, above all, an humble and submissive heart. Holocausts and sacrifices were not acceptable to Thee, said the prophet; but, O my God, Thou dost not reject a contrite and humble heart.

January 18th.

Christ's obedience to Mary and Joseph.

I. POINT.

It is worthy of admiration, that from the twelfth year of Jesus till the thirtieth, the Gospel says nothing of Him but these words: "And He was subject to them" (Luke II, 51): words which express the state of His continual dependence from the moment of His ineffable conception. The whole life of Jesus is expressed and summed up in the words: "He was subject to

them." He did nothing else, He came for this, that He might confound our pride by His humility, and our rebellion by His submission. O life of obedience and subjection of Jesus, worthy to be adored, because it is the life of a God, worthy to be imitated, because it is the life of a man, but of a Man, who is our Master and our Lord, who became obedient to save us, and to be the Prototype, the Model and Example of all men, for they can be saved only by imitating Him!

II. POINT.

"He was subject to them." Let us weigh the qualities of this obedience. He was subject. Who? The only Son of God, the eternal Sovereign, almighty, infinite in the infinity of His greatness and of His divine perfections. O wonder! He, who was begotten of the Father, before all ages, without need, and independent, is born of a Virgin in time, dependent and wishing to depend upon her. But whom does He obey? Mary, as His Mother, and Joseph, as the Guardian of His childhood and His youth. It is God, who is subject to men, the Creator to His creature. God obeys a man. O unparalleled humility! A woman commands God. O sublime and unexampled elevation! Learn this day, dust and ashes, learn to humble yourself, to subject yourself, and to bend under the yoke of a God, who for you deigned to subject Himself to you.

III. POINT.

But how was Jesus subject? To what degree did He render Himself subject and obedient? In all things, always, even in the humblest services, assisting and serving St. Joseph, in his trade as a carpenter, according to the testimony of Scripture, promptly, humbly and punctually. Mary and Joseph commanded, and Jesus obeyed; they called, and Jesus answered, as for-

merly Samuel answered God: "Here I am, for Thou didst call me" (1 Kings III, 9); they ordered Him to go, and Jesus went, so that He could say to them, what the elder brother of the prodigal said to his father: I have never failed to obey thy commandments (Luke XV, 29). O example of a perfect obedience, which knows no excuse, no delay, no exception! O obedience, which teaches us to regard, not the capacity, the virtue or quality of him who commands, but the will and the authority of God, in virtue of which a superior intimates to us His orders.

January 19th.

Christ's humiliations at the different periods of His life.

I. POINT.

"Jesus grew in age."

The Son of God could have come into the world and appeared first as a perfect man, as the first man was created; yet He wished to be conceived, born, and to grow in the ordinary way. If it was a great humiliation to God to become man, a greater to become passible and mortal, there is still one which seems superior to all the others: it is to have become a child and subject to the various developments of age. O Jesus, humbled in us and for us, growing in body and advancing in age, but always great in Thy abasement, make me become with Thee humble, little, a child, that I may also grow with Thee, or rather by Thee, in grace, in wisdom and in the fulness of the Holy Ghost, until, after completing my course, I may be able to say with Thee and to Thee: "I have finished the work which Thou hast given me to do" (John XVII, 4).

II. POINT.

Jesus wished to bear the infirmities of the different ages of human life, that we might have a Pontiff, who

could compassionate our miseries (Heb. IV, 15), having been tried by all kinds of evils, and made like unto us in all things, but without sin, as is mentioned by St. Paul, and without all the imperfections that proceed from sin. Jesus sanctified, consecrated and deified, not only the different ages, but also all the moments of our life, so that the minutes, the hours, the days, the nights and the years of our whole life may receive a special grace from all the moments which Jesus lived. O moments, O hours, O years of the life of Jesus, perpetual source of grace, of life and of sanctification for us!

III. POINT.

To imitate this mystery spiritually, we may notice three states of Jesus in our souls. The first, Jesus taking birth in us; the second, Jesus formed in us; the third, Jesus growing in us. He is born in us by the first grace, when by baptism we rise to life from the death of sin, and this resuscitation He Himself calls "being born anew". He is formed in us by the second grace, when we follow the good and fervent desires which He excites in our hearts, and when we acquire from them a holy habit of good and of virtue. The first two states are expressed by these words of St. Paul: "My little children of whom I am in labor again until Jesus Christ be formed in you" (Gal. IV, 19). Finally, Jesus grows in us, when we advance in His ways, when we tend efficaciously to perfection and exercise ourselves in the most solid virtues. God, full of mercy, prepares for each one of us a state of perfected grace, to which He calls us by various means, and to which we ought to tend and aspire by continual progress; for, if we do not receive His graces and render them profitable, they are lost for us and even contribute to our ruin, according to the words of Christ Himself: "He, who gathereth not

with Me, scattereth'' (Luke XI, 23). Alas! how many moments have passed away, or rather how many crowns have been lost, how many eternities of glory destroyed by our past negligence in aspiring to the perfection proper to our state! O Lord, may it please Thee to grow unceasingly in my soul, and to make me grow in Thee, by a faithful and uninterrupted correspondence with Thy grace and love.

Second Sunday after the Epiphany.

Christ's union with His Church and the faithful soul.

I. POINT.

*There was a wedding to which Jesus was invited.
(John II, 2.)*

This wedding, according to St. Augustine, represents the marriage of Jesus Christ with His Church. We are all called to these spiritual nuptials, because we all together form one same body or Church, of which Jesus Christ is the Head and Spouse. It is also true that each soul is the spouse of Jesus Christ, if truly justified by His grace, according to the words of St. Paul: I have espoused you all to Jesus Christ, to present you to Him as a chaste virgin, all pure (2 Cor. XI, 2). Behold the dignity of our soul; if we could know it well, and esteem according to God all that it is worth, we would easily despise what we are, and all that we can desire to be according to the world.

II. POINT.

St. Augustine, representing the obligations of the soul which Jesus Christ takes for His spouse, expresses himself thus: You espouse a King, and not only a King, but a God: your King is your God, and your God is your Spouse. What do you bring to this Spouse, you, who have as your portion only the bondage, the

hideousness of sin and an utter absence of all good? He does not take you, then, to increase His riches, but to enrich you; He does not take you for your beauty, you were as black as the Ethiopian whom Moses espoused to represent this mystery, and He has made you whiter than snow in the waters of baptism; He has rendered you all beautiful and spotless by the effusion of His grace and His spirit; but what is this beauty which He has given you? The prophet says that it "is all within" (Ps. XLIV, 14). It consists, says St. Augustine, particularly in humility. It is by recognizing her ugliness, by confessing her own deformity, that the soul receives a new splendor, and imitates better the perfect beauty of Jesus Christ, her Spouse. It is little to do good, if we do not labor to do it with simplicity and humility of heart. O immortal Spouse, who can sufficiently admire, praise and exalt the singular goodness, which made Thee love and seek our souls in the hideousness of sin, to render them beautiful by the virtue of Thy grace?

III. POINT.

This heavenly Spouse, continues St. Augustine, has also redeemed you. You were a slave, and, by your own fault, voluntarily submissive to the bondage of the devil. You preferred to serve this tyrant rather than God, your lawful King. Yet God, whom you thus despised, and who, to punish you, had only to leave you in your bondage, has delivered you, breaking the chains of your captivity to render you His spouse. Finally, you were sick, and, according to the prophet Isaias, speaking of the state of the sinner: From the crown of the head to the soles of the feet there was nothing sound in you, and He healed you (Is. I, 6). The Spouse of our souls cured us by His grace, but this

cure is only begun here below; to complete it, we must labor with Him every day; properly speaking, it will be only in heaven that all the favors of the Spouse will receive their final perfection. The time of this life is, as it were, the espousals and the preparation for this sacred marriage, which begins and is perfected here below, particularly by the reception of the most precious Body of Jesus Christ at holy Communion; but it will be entirely consummated only in heaven, where we shall be inseparably united to Him. Let us then say to Him with the same St. Augustine: Lord, I do not hide from Thee my wounds; Thou art a physician, and I am sick; Thou art full of mercy, and I am full of miseries; save me, and I shall be saved; heal me, and I shall have perfect health.

Monday after the Second Sunday after Epiphany.

Fervor of spirit in serving the Lord according to one's vocation.

I. POINT.

Let us employ ourselves according to the different gifts we have received from God (Rom. XII, 6).

We are all members of one body, of which Jesus is the head. As each member has its particular function useful to the whole body, so we are destined by God for different employments, according as it has pleased Him to choose us. St. Paul wishes us to acknowledge this, that each one may improve the gift, or the talent, that he has received, and may correspond to the grace of his vocation. Let him, says he, who guides others, do it with care and vigilance; let him who exercises mercy, do it with joy; let each one discharge the duties proper to his state, and fulfil his function without envying that of others. In all our different ministries, let us show ourselves servants of the same God (Rom. XII, 5), and

members of the same body, by humility, meekness, patience and the other virtues, to build up the mystical body of Jesus Christ and labor reciprocally to sanctify each other.

II. POINT.

Be "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord" (Rom. XII, 11). In whatever state we may serve God, let us be fervent and faithful; let us not be satisfied with simply doing good, let us do all the good we can. Doing works of justice, let us do them justly (Deut. XVI, 20), let us leave nothing undone, let us endeavor to render them perfect; for what is this fervor St. Paul demands of us, if not the attentive vigilance, the abundant justice, the ardor of charity and of the love of God, which is "poured into our hearts" (Rom. V, 5), and which makes us "run in the way of His commandments" without growing weary; it makes us undertake all to please Him, and suffer all to glorify Him. "I have run in the way of Thy commandments," said David, "when Thou didst enlarge my heart" (Ps. CXVIII, 32). Fear contracts the heart, love expands it, fills it with delight, disposes it to the practice of good, relieves its trials, removes all difficulties; for, according to St. Augustine, love banishes pain or renders it sweet and agreeable.

III. POINT.

Love one another with brotherly love (Rom. XII, 10). This is the first fruit of this fervent love; he who loves God in this manner, loves his neighbor as the image of God. But in what does the apostle make this fraternal charity consist, and how far does it extend? He wishes that our charity should be sincere, that it should have its source in the heart, that we should love our brethren truly and wish them good. Prevent one another, says he again, by tokens of honor (Rom. XII,

10); anticipate one another and do not wait till you are anticipated; "weep with them that weep, rejoice with them that rejoice" (Rom. XII, 15); do not examine whether they do so to you: it matters little to you whether they love you, but it is infinitely important for you to love them. "Bless even those who persecute you," bless them and beware of cursing them (Rom. XII, 14); let your charity be proof against everything, and love one another as Jesus Christ has loved you (Ephes. V, 2). O amiable Jesus, all the waters of tribulation could not extinguish Thy charity, all our ingratitude could not cool or diminish its fire; grant by this same charity, that the fervor of our love for Thee may make us love those whom Thou lovest, and whom Thou hast washed in the same blood by which Thou hast redeemed us all.

Tuesday after the Second Sunday after Epiphany.

Miracle at the Marriage of Cana.

I. POINT.

*"The wine failing, the Mother of Jesus said to Him:
They have no wine" (John II, 3).*

This wine, according to St. Bernard, signifies the human spirit, worldly knowledge, all the vain reasonings which only intoxicate us and obscure the reason instead of enlightening it. We must conquer our own spirit, to give place to the spirit of God. We must destroy the spirit of pride, which attaches us to our own sense, to our own judgment; we must renounce this fatal wine which troubles us, and which makes us lose the right spirit, the guiding spirit, as the ancient philosophers had lost it, who, believing themselves, as St. Paul says, the wise of the world, had become fools; for God has changed worldly wisdom "into folly" (1 Cor.

I, 20). The spirit of God cannot come into us, till after the destruction of this human spirit, full of pride and presumption, which ruled us; and Jesus Christ produces to-day the new and miraculous wine, only when the natural and ordinary wine has failed.

II. POINT.

“Fill the water-pots with water” (John II, 7). This water represents humble distrust of ourselves, profound knowledge of our misery and the fear of God. After being separated from our own spirit and the vain prejudices with which we are preoccupied by the false lights of human prudence, we begin to become capable of receiving the divine lights and the impressions of truth. We fear God, we know ourselves, and we become humble. Thou shalt take from them their own spirit, said the prophet, and they shall return to their dust. What is it to return to our dust, but to recognize our imperfections, to acknowledge our nothingness and our inability to do any good; an important knowledge which produces fear, distrust and contempt of self, the first disposition necessary for grace, figured by the water changed into wine.

III. POINT.

“And they filled them” (John II, 7). Jesus, by His power, changed the water into an excellent wine, which signifies the spirit and the grace of the Saviour. The wine of man has failed, that wine which inebriates instead of strengthening; the vessels are filled with water, that is, with the knowledge of our weakness. Thou hast taken from the creature its own spirit, O Lord, it has returned to its dust, it has plunged itself in its nothingness before Thee. What remains? Thou shalt send Thy spirit and it shall be created; and Thou

shalt renew the face of the earth. O happy and salutary change, infinitely desirable loss of our own spirit, which renders us capable of receiving the spirit of God! O Jesus, by Thy command I have filled with water the vessel of my heart; it is full of miseries. I venture to expose it before Thee, that Thou mayst work upon it according to Thy power and goodness; renew Thy miracles, O Lord, change the water into wine. I acknowledge my weakness, change it into Thy strength; I am in darkness, enlighten me; I am incapable of any good, labor in me, that I may be able to say with Thy apostle: "I will glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me" (2 Cor. XII, 9); "I can do all things in Him, who strengtheneth me" (Phil. IV, 13).

Wednesday after the Second Sunday after Epiphany.

The only words the Blessed Virgin said to men.

I. POINT.

"The Mother of Jesus said to the waiters: Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye" (John II, 5).

Mary having become a mother, did not forget her character of a servant of God. Elevated to the highest pinnacle of greatness, she kept her own lowliness always before her: therefore she was not offended, she was not discouraged by the apparent neglect with which Jesus treated her before all the guests. Her respect and confidence were not diminished; she no longer insisted, but submissive to His will and expecting all from His goodness, which was so well known to her, she endeavored to inspire the same dispositions in others. Do all that He shall tell you: a powerful example which leaves us without excuse. Mary humbles herself under the hand of a God become her Son, and slaves are irri-

tated; they rise up, they murmur and complain against Providence and against its orders! Impatient and proud in their prayers, as if God were obliged to grant them everything, they grow weary and cannot wait for His own time. O Blessed Virgin, grant that, learning from thee to pray and to humble ourselves, we may also merit by thy intercession to be heard and received into favor.

II. POINT.

“Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye.” The only words of Mary to men, for Holy Scripture relates no others; words worthy of Mary, words which contain all the instruction of the Christian, all divine prudence, all the wisdom and science of the saints, an abridged lesson of all the virtues, a short and certain way to attain to the kingdom of God. Do all that Jesus shall tell you; do this, and you shall live: this comprises the whole man. Man went astray in his ways; but if he obeys Jesus, he will return to the right way. Man in sinning degraded himself; he fell from his noble position, he lost his first beauty; but if he does what Jesus tells him, all his losses will soon be repaired and will be restored to him with advantage. O Jesus, I shall not be deceived in listening to Thee as my Master; I shall not go astray in following Thee as my Shepherd. Blessed is he who hears Thy word and keeps it (Luke XI, 28); “for Thou hast the words of eternal life” (John VI, 69); “speak, Lord, Thy servant heareth” (1 Kings III, 9). Command, and he will obey.

III. POINT.

“Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye.” Mary speaks to Jesus in our favor, she intercedes for us, she defends us, she exposes to her Son our needs and our

miseries; she omits nothing that depends upon her, to win for us His compassion; but, at the same time, she warns us to do on our side all that depends on us. "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye"; she thus teaches us, that in vain we invoke Him, in vain we rely on His charitable care in the affair of our salvation, if we do not labor efficaciously in obeying Jesus, in keeping His commandments, in directing ourselves according to His laws and His maxims. Therefore, invoke Mary; after God, rely upon her to obtain your salvation; but listen to what she answers you, and know that you will never invoke her with success, if you are not disposed to do what she prescribes for you. "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye." O excellent and salutary counsel, which we ought to receive with respect and to follow with fidelity! O wise and merciful Mediatrix, obtain for us from thy Son a sincere will to do all that He shall tell us, and to obey Him in everything and everywhere.

Thursday after the Second Sunday after Epiphany.

Humble vigilance over one's self and confidence in God.

I. POINT.

*There were shepherds who were watching their
flocks by night (Luke II, 8).*

Jesus manifests and communicates Himself to those who watch to co-operate with His grace. Therefore, what care, what vigilance, what fidelity are necessary to correspond to the voice of divine Wisdom, which calls us and instructs us at every moment. This made our Lord say: "What I say, I say to all" (Mark XIII, 37). "Watch, lest you enter into temptation" (Mat. XXVI, 41); "watch, because your adversary, as a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may de-

your" (1 Pet. V, 8); watch, for you know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man shall come (Luke XII, 40). — Watch, as those diligent shepherds watched over their flocks; if you are yourself a shepherd, watch over the souls confided to your care; but I say unto all, watch over your own soul, it is the deposit which the Lord has committed to your keeping, and of which He will demand an account; watch over the faculties and powers of your soul; watch over your senses, and principally over your heart. Keep it closed against all the affections of earth, and open only on the side of heaven, to lift to it all your thoughts, your desires and your love.

II. POINT.

The thoughts of God are sublime and His ways admirable in the guidance of the great work of the coming of His Son into the world; He does not send His angel to announce it to the philosophers and the rich of the world, but to poor, simple, humble shepherds. Consider, says St. Paul, those whom God has called, among us: "there are not many wise according to the flesh" (1 Cor. I, 26), not many powerful and illustrious; but He has chosen the least wise according to the world, to confound the wise; He has chosen the weak to confound the strong, He has made use of those who seemed low and contemptible, and who were nothing, to destroy what was great, that no one might glory before Him (1 Cor. I, 29). Simplicity, poverty of spirit, humility of heart, are three dispositions infinitely agreeable to Jesus, and which He recompenses by supernatural lights. "Father, I give Thee thanks," said He, "because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones" (Mat. XI, 25). O Jesus, render us little with Thee, that we

may be worthy to see Thy light, and that, according to Thy word, we may enter the kingdom of heaven (Mat. XVIII, 3).

III. POINT.

“Fear not” (Luke II, 10). Jesus is the solid and most sure support of our confidence in God: for by Him what can we not do, and what ought we not to hope for? If God gave us His only Son, says St. Paul, how shall He not with Him give us all things? (Rom. VIII, 32). Jesus is our strength and our refuge, and He becomes to-day our wisdom, our justice, our holiness and our redemption (1 Cor. I, 30); therefore the angel said: “Fear not”. As Jesus, appearing to His disciples, said to them: “It is I, fear not” (Mat. XIV, 27), and by these words inspired in them a confidence, or rather an assurance, which banished fear from their hearts: so Jesus, at His birth, commands us by His angel not to fear, because He comes to save us (Luke IX, 56), and to protect us against all our enemies, that, being delivered, we may serve Him with humble confidence (John III, 17). O Jesus, who dost deign to take a new birth in my soul by holy Communion, speak to me efficaciously these admirable words: It is I, be not afraid.

Friday after the Second Sunday after Epiphany.

The mystery of the Saviour's birth, a source of grace to the end of the world.

I. POINT.

“This day a Saviour is born to you” (Luke II, 11).

The birth of Jesus, as to the substance of the mystery, is past; but as to the grace and its effects, is a living source which always flows and is never exhausted; therefore, we may say at all times: this day the Saviour is born. But why is He born? Properly

it is not for the angels; it is not for the Jews only, it is for all nations; for "is He the God of the Jews only," asks St. Paul; "is He not also the God of the Gentiles?" (Rom. III, 29). He is born not only for some, but for all; for those who have preceded us, for us who are now living, and for those who are yet to come. As no one has been exempt from sin, so no one could be delivered but by the Saviour. He came, then, for all (1 Tim. II, 6), for all in general, and for each one in particular; so that I may say: To-day the Saviour is born for me. O sweet words, O blessed tidings, which should pour a divine unction of piety and confidence into my soul! The Saviour is born for me.

II. POINT.

But who is He, who is born? He is the Son of God, expected by the Jews as a deliverer, and sought for by the Magi as a King; it is He, who is worthy, as the Saviour, to be recognized as King and Sovereign of our souls, and to be adored and loved by angels and men; because in saving us by His coming, by His life and His death, He acquired the title of Lord and King over us all, for time and for eternity, according to these words: "The Lamb that was slain, is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and benediction" throughout all ages (Apoc. V, 12). O Jesus, who art born our King and our Saviour, reign and rule over us, that, obeying Thee and being submissive to Thy empire, we may merit the salvation which Thou dost bring to us. From the midst of the stormy sea of this world we cry to Thee with Thy apostles: Save us, Lord, for without Thee, we perish (Mark IV, 38).

III. POINT.

By this sign you shall know Him, "you shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling-clothes" (Luke II, 12).

It is, in fact, a great sign, and a greater miracle than the creation of the world or any other wonder, to see God in the form of a servant, the wisdom of the Father enveloped in swaddling-clothes, the divine Word, who fills all by His essence, lying in a manger. An admirable sign, of which Isaias said: "The Lord shall give you a sign: behold a Virgin shall conceive and shall bring forth a Son" (Is. VII, 14). The ancients complained that they sought God without finding Him; the spouse said: I have sought Him whom I love, and I have not found Him (Cant. III, 1); and David said: "My tears have been my bread day and night, whilst it is said to me daily: Where is thy God?" (Ps. XLI, 4). The ancients could also complain, that, if they found God, He was terrible and threatening amidst thunder and lightning: so that they dared not approach Him for fear of dying. But we find Him an Infant, swathed in the manger and lying on the straw; He comes to us, not seated above the cherubim, nor as formerly upon Mount Sinai, in the midst of fire and flames, but meek, amiable and gentle. O grace, O benignity, O goodness of God, our Saviour (Tit. III, 4), who manifests Himself to us this day, to win our hearts and to attach us to Him irrevocably.

Saturday after the Second Sunday after Epiphany.

The Blessed Virgin's protection is powerful and efficacious.

I. POINT.

"There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the Mother of Jesus was there, and Jesus also was invited." (John II, 1.)

Blessed company, blessed banquet, at which Jesus and Mary are found; there no evil can approach, there no good could be wanting. Mary was the first called, and Jesus afterwards because of her. He who knows

how to render this holy Mother favorable, is certain that her Divine Son also will be favorable. She attracted Him from heaven to earth, from the bosom of His Father into her virginal womb; she gave Him to the world by her holy delivery; she carried Him into Egypt, and brought Him back into Israel; to-day she comes to the wedding feast to bless it, and if she is worthily invoked, she will bring Him to us, to live and reign in our souls. O holy Virgin, receive us under thy protection, and give us thy Son. O Jesus and Mary, remain with us, and never permit us to be separated from you.

II. POINT.

The presence of the Blessed Virgin is never without fruit. Here, unsolicited by the guests, she prays for them: charity alone urges her; she is touched by their necessities, she anticipates their desires and their petitions. The gracious attention of this Mother of mercy, the goodness of her heart, and the humility of her prayer, are three dispositions which enable her to obtain all that she asks. In whom will not this loving solicitude inspire entire confidence, who will not rely upon her goodness, animated simply by her ever beneficent charity? She assists those who do not invoke her, will she then refuse those who implore her assistance? Will she abandon those who hope in her mediation, and who cast themselves into her arms? O Blessed Virgin, Jesus, the Sovereign Good and the abundant source of all good, who delights to communicate Himself, gave to thee this divine inclination; make me feel its happy effects.

III. POINT.

“They have no wine” (John II, 3). Mary does not use many words; she is satisfied to make known the need of those whom she wishes to aid, and this

way of praying to Jesus shows how great are her humility, her respect, and her confidence in Him. Such a prayer cannot fail to be heard: and if Jesus seems at first to reject her, this apparent refusal only serves to show more brilliantly the power of the Mother over the Son; for after He had said to her: "Woman, what is it to Me and to thee" (John II, 4), which signifies only that He does not hold from her the power of working miracles, and that flesh and blood must have no share in it; after having said to her, that His "hour was not yet come", He, nevertheless, acquiesces in her desire, He does what she asks, He advances His hour, and He works in her favor the first of His miracles (John II, 11). O Blessed Virgin, who by thy submission, thy humility, thy very silence, dost compel, so to speak, the Almighty to favor the miserable, draw down His mercy upon my sinful soul.

Third Sunday after the Epiphany.

Christ's words to the leper: "Be thou made clean."

I. POINT.

*Jesus extending His hand, touched the leper, and said to him: "I will, be thou made clean."
(Mat. VIII, 3.)*

Jesus extends His hand to make known the virtue of His sacred flesh, which by its touch can impart health to the sick and life to the dead: a flesh united to the Divinity, infinitely pure and purifying, supremely holy and sanctifying, which communicates purity and holiness to souls and bodies; for what is said, that "all who touched only the hem of His garment, were made whole" (Mark VI, 56), "because a virtue went forth from Him which healed all" (Luke VI, 19), must be understood to mean the cure of both souls and bodies. David said: "Thou didst stretch forth Thy hand, and

Thy right hand hath saved me" (Ps. CXXXVII, 7). Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist gives us His sacred Flesh, the source of life, of health and all the virtues: whence is it, then, that we remain always imperfect, languid and sick, if not because our faith is weak and imperfect? "All things are possible to him that believeth," said Jesus (Mark IX, 22). O Lord, strengthen my faith; make me feel the all-powerful virtue of Thy most holy Flesh, with which Thou dost vouchsafe to feed me in holy Communion.

II. POINT.

Jesus touched the leper to show that He was not subject to the law, which forbade lepers to be touched. They, indeed, ought not to touch them, who could be defiled by the contact; they ought to avoid the company of sinners, who, sinners themselves, weak and prone to evil, are as likely to be perverted as to corrupt others by a mutual communication of bad example. But Thou, O Jesus, "separated from sinners" (Heb. VII, 26), and further removed from sin than heaven is from earth, Thou, whom this sovereign evil, the source of all other evils, cannot attack, mayst approach sinners to sanctify them, touch the lepers to heal them, since without participating in their corruption, Thou dost communicate to them Thy purity. O Jesus, deign to come to me, or command me to go to Thee: touch the leprosy of my soul, and purify me: wash me more and more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sins: wash me in Thy precious Blood, and I shall be purified, "cleanse me, and I shall become whiter than snow" (Ps. L, 9).

III. POINT.

"I will; be thou made clean" (Mat. VIII, 3). Jesus answered the leper in almost the same terms as

the leper had used to make his petition. The leper had said: "If Thou wilt"; and Jesus answered: "I will". The leper had said: "Thou canst make me clean"; and Jesus adds: "Be thou made clean". O ineffable goodness of Jesus, which grants the desire of the poor, which accomplishes so entirely what they ask, which does the will of them that fear Him! He accommodates Himself to our weakness, and grants all our petitions. Jesus, by touching, shows his humanity; but by commanding: "Be thou made clean", He proves His divinity; for He shows that He heals the leper as God by His own virtue, without borrowed aid. O Jesus, my Lord and my God, say in my favor: "I will": command me to be interiorly and exteriorly healed and purified: if it be necessary, compel my rebellious will, and render it docile, submissive and obedient to Thine.

Monday after the Third Sunday after Epiphany.

Humility and self-distrust.

I. POINT.

"Being of one mind one towards another. Not minding high things, but consenting to the humble, be not wise in your own conceits."

(Rom. XII, 16.)

Do not exalt yourself, for "he that exalteth himself, shall be humbled" (Mat. XXIII, 12). Remain in the knowledge of your nothingness, confess it without disguise, fearing with St. Paul, lest you should be esteemed more than you deserve; confess your misery and say with the centurion: "I am not worthy" (Mat. VIII, 8); words which comprise all the steps by which we should descend and abase ourselves. Let us first acknowledge our nothingness, for we are nothing; our poverty, for we have nothing; for all that we have and all that we are, we hold from God by an absolute de-

pendence on His mercy. Let us acknowledge our indigence; we are not only poor and naked, but we are also indigent, having need of many things: "I am a beggar and poor," said David (Ps. XXXIX, 18); we are reduced to beggary, and we have no resource in our misery, but to beg and to ask of God, as an alms, what is necessary for us. And on what other ground could we hope to receive any blessing, not having the means to purchase or merit His graces, which are indispensable to us, which are above all merit, and which cannot be sufficiently esteemed.

II. POINT.

Accommodate yourself to the little ones; "God accepteth not the person of man" (Gal. II, 6). He made the little and the great, and He hath the same care of all (Wisd. VI, 8); all are equal before Him, and all should love each other "as members of one body" (Rom. XII, 5), of which Jesus Christ is the Head. But who could regard any one as little, compared with himself? Could he be so by birth, or by his employments? "Let him that is great among you", says our Lord, "become as the least", and let him, who governs, regard himself as the servant of all (Luke XXII, 26). Shall we dare to esteem ourselves greater by merit or virtue? He who thinks he has more, by the very fact proves that he has less. Let us, then, not think any one beneath us. Can we, in fact, prefer ourselves to any one, when we consider our weakness and our incapacity, and that of ourselves we cannot even conceive a good thought? (2 Cor. III, 5). If we recognized the universal worthlessness of our whole being and of all our talents as regards God, who has no need of us or of our goods, ought we not to confess before Him, that, after having fulfilled all our duties, we are only "unprofitable servants"? (Luke XVII, 10).

III. POINT.

“Be not wise in your own conceits” (Rom. XII, 16). All human wisdom is folly before God (1 Cor. III, 19), and our lights are only darkness. The wisest and most enlightened among men is he who is most convinced of his own ignorance. The ignorance of man is so great, that he can scarcely distinguish what is suitable to him from what is not: the evil and perverted inclination of his will prevents him from desiring his real good, and often precipitates him into the greatest misfortune. This made the prophet say: “Woe to you that are wise in your own eyes, and prudent in your own conceits” (Is. V, 21). O Jesus, I humbly confess my nothingness, my indigence, my blindness, my ignorance and darkness; “enlighten my eyes, that I may not sleep the sleep of death” (Ps. XII, 4); “send Thy light and Thy truth” (Ps. XLII, 3), that they may guide me; “be Thou my protector” and guide (Ps. XXX, 3). O Lord, one abyss calls another abyss (Ps. XLI, 8). “Deep calleth on deep.” May the abyss of my misery call the abyss of Thy mercy!

Tuesday after the Third Sunday after Epiphany.**Pardon of injuries.**

I. POINT.

“Render to no man evil for evil” (Rom. XII, 17).

It was said in the Old Law: “An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth” (Mat. V, 38); but in the New Law, Jesus says to us by word and example: “Love your enemies” (Mat. V, 44). He first addresses Himself to our hearts, because, as He says elsewhere: “From the heart come forth evil thoughts” (Mat. XV, 19), hatred, revenge: it is, then, the heart that must be reformed and tranquillized: in the heart we must stifle the feeling of resentment of injuries; in the heart we

must pardon them, in order not to render evil for evil, but, on the contrary, love for hatred, good will for ill-treatment, blessing for cursing; for "revenge is Mine, saith the Lord" (Rom. XII, 19), and no affront, no injustice, no ill-treatment renders it lawful for man, who must pardon all, to obtain pardon from God; that he may say with confidence: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us" (Mat. VI, 12).

II. POINT.

God commands us to love in three ways. With the affection of the heart: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart" (Deut. VI, 5); by the word of the mouth: Confess the Lord, "because He is good" (Ps. CV, 1); finally, by our conduct and our actions: "Let us love, not in word only, but in deed and in truth" (1 John III, 18). Our Lord wishes us to love our enemies in three ways: With the affections of the heart, "Love your enemies" (Mat. V, 44); with the word of the mouth: "Pray for those who persecute you and calumniate you" (Mat. V, 44); finally, by our conduct and good actions: "Do good to those who hate you. If thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat; if he thirst, give him to drink" (Rom. XII, 20); we should, then, desire to do good to our enemies. O ardent charity of Jesus, which orders us to love them as we should love Him! O powerful assistance to love them, to behold and love God in them! Holy and salutary motive, which sweetens all the severity and difficulty of the law!

III. POINT.

Kings and legislators do not give a reason for the laws which they impose; but Jesus proposes to us motives for His laws, to engage us more effectually to

observe them. "Love your enemies," He says, "that you may be the children of your Father, who is in heaven" (Mat. V, 45). What a glory, and what a recompense, truly worthy of our efforts, "that we should be called, and should be the children of God" (1 John III, 1); that we should venture to say with confidence: "Our Father, who art in heaven" (Mat. VI, 9); that we should have a right to His kingdom, as brothers of and "coheirs with Jesus Christ" (Rom. VIII, 17). Children imitate and resemble their fathers. Let us imitate our heavenly Father, "who maketh His sun to rise on the just and the unjust" (Mat. V, 45). Jesus adds: "If you love only those who love you, what reward shall you have? The pagans do as much" (Mat. V, 46). It is charity, then, which distinguishes Christians from pagans, the children of God from the children of Babylon. Without this perfect charity, without this love which embraces even our enemies, we are unworthy to bear the name of disciples of Jesus Christ and children of God; for such was the love of Jesus for us: "Love one another," said He, "as I have loved you" (John XV, 17). O magnificent and superabundant recompense of perfect charity, which is God Himself, to become heirs of the heavenly kingdom, and children of Him, who dwells and reigns there from all eternity!

Wednesday after the Third Sunday after Epiphany.

"If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean."

I. POINT.

*"Behold a leper came and adored Him, saying:
Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me
clean."* (Mat. VIII, 2.)

The leper addressed himself to Jesus, not only as to a prophet, but as to his God, rendering Him the

supreme worship of adoration, which belongs only to the Divine Majesty, believing and confessing publicly, that nothing was impossible to Him: "If Thou wilt, Thou canst." God alone can do all that He wills: "Whatsoever the Lord pleased He hath done, in heaven, in earth, in the sea, and in all the deeps" (Ps. CXXXIV, 6). Who can resist the will of the Most High? (Esther XIII, 11). "He spoke, and they were made; He commanded, and they were created" (Ps. CXLVIII, 5). He said: "Let there be light" (Gen. I, 3), and this word dispelled the darkness which covered the face of the earth. To-day He gives light to the leper, and he, seeing only the humanity of the heavenly physician, whom he invokes, recognizes His hidden divinity, believes in His power, and confides in His goodness.

II. POINT.

"If Thou wilt, Thou canst." These words repeated with lively faith are a treasure in our poverty, a resource in our indigence, a sure assistance in our needs, an efficacious consolation in our miseries, in our trials, in all the contradictions of life. I can do nothing, it is true, but Thou, Lord, Thou canst do all that Thou wilt, and Thou dost will all that is for my good, because Thou art full of mercy. I am plunged in sin as in a deep abyss (Ps. LXVIII, 3); but Thou canst deliver me: my enemies lay snares for me on all sides; but Thou wilt confound their malice: I am in darkness; but "in Thy light I shall see light" (Ps. XXXV, 10). "If Thou wilt, Thou canst"; Lord, Thy power is without limit; deign to will by Thy goodness, deign to will and to do by Thy mercy; may we oppose no obstacle to this beneficent will, by which Thou hast made us what we are, and by which Thou dost destine us to eternal happiness.

III. POINT.

The faith of the leper and his prayer should be an instruction to us: "If Thou wilt, Thou canst." He asks for nothing; but by making known his necessity, he excites the goodness of God, from whom he expects all. If Thou wilt: he does not doubt His power; Thou canst. In exterior and sensible things Jesus can do all that He wills; but in those of grace, sometimes, and too often, He wills, and He cannot accomplish it. What does Jesus will, or rather what does He not will for our salvation and perfection? But He cannot perform it, because we do not will with Him; we bind His hands, we restrict His power, we check the course of His mercies. On His part, Jesus wills and can do all that is expedient for the glory of His Father and our salvation; but the effect will not follow, if we do not will and labor with Him; for, although He willed to create us without us, He will not, says St. Augustine, sanctify and save us without our co-operation. O almighty Jesus, whose goodness is checked by our malice and by our want of docility, conquer our resistance, and thus show Thy authority which is equally merciful and supreme.

Thursday after the Third Sunday after Epiphany.

Dispositions to approach the holy Eucharist worthily.

I. POINT.

"Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof; say but the word, and my servant shall be healed" (Mat. VIII, 8).

The Church puts these words of the centurion in the mouth of all the faithful, when they are about to receive Jesus Christ in holy Communion, because they contain all the dispositions necessary to approach it worthily. The first disposition expressed by these words — I am not worthy — is a true humility of heart,

which consists in the knowledge and sincere avowal of our baseness, of our misery, of our infirmities; and in the recognition and public confession of the greatness, the holiness and majesty of Jesus. I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter into my house. "Lord, what is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that Thou shouldst visit him?" (Ps. VIII, 5). What is this rebellious and sinful man, that Thou shouldst honor him so much as not only to set Thy heart upon him (Job VII, 17), but also to give Thyself entirely to him? What is man, that he should serve as a dwelling for his God? "The heavens are not pure in Thy sight" (Job XV, 15), Lord, and Thou dost deign to dwell in my sinful soul!

II. POINT.

"Say but the word." The faith of the centurion appears in this expression: he believed that Jesus, by a single word, could cure his servant. A second disposition to receive the body of the Saviour is, then, a lively faith, which makes us believe, without hesitation, that it is truly His flesh that we receive. Jesus by a single word created the world (Ps. CXLVIII, 5); how shall we not believe that for us He changes the bread into His body by virtue of this same word! And if we believe this with a firm and lively faith, what sentiments of respect, of love and gratitude will not this faith excite in our hearts! O Jesus, into what depths of humility should I plunge myself in Thy presence! How ardent should be my attachment to Thee! And what shall I render to Thee for all Thy benefits, but above all for this inestimable treasure which comprehends all others!

III. POINT.

The third disposition is a firm confidence in Jesus: Say but the word, and my soul shall be healed. This

confidence must be like that of the centurion, founded on the profound conviction of the power and goodness of Jesus: if I, said he, — and every one ought to say the same with him, — if “I, who am only a man subject to authority, having soldiers under me, and I say to one: Go, and he goeth; and to another: Come, and he cometh; and to my servant: Do this, and he doeth it” (Mat. VIII, 9); how much more, O Lord, canst Thou who art God, supreme, independent, whose will nothing can resist (Esther XIII, 11), how much more canst Thou order us to be submissive to Thee! All creatures obey Thy voice; shall man alone, who is capable of knowing and loving Thee, dare to resist Thee and oppose Thy designs? Say, then, O Lord, one word so powerful and so efficacious, that it will subdue to Thee all the faculties of my soul. I hope for this favor from Thy mercy; refuse it not, O Lord: Say only one word, that word which bends the most rebellious wills, and immediately my soul shall be healed, and delivered from all its miseries.

Friday after the Third Sunday after Epiphany.

God excludes no one from the heavenly inheritance.

I. POINT.

“I say unto you, that many shall come from the East and the West, who shall sit with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of heaven.”
(Mat. VIII, 11.)

Sweet promise, consoling declaration, which excludes no one from the heavenly inheritance, and which gives to all the hope of securing it. Jesus came upon earth to rally the children of God, and to gather them from all the parts of the world (Ez. XI, 17), to make of them a single nation; He enlightened “those who were seated in darkness, and in the shadow of death”

(Ps. CVI, 10); therefore He is called the "Light of nations". He delivered them from error and sin, to make them share the grace of salvation; according to what He Himself said to the Jews: "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also; they shall hear My voice, and there shall be but one fold and one Shepherd" (John X, 16). O God, who hast called us from darkness to Thy admirable light, to transfer us into the kingdom of Thy beloved Son, make us worthy to recognize and proclaim Thy benefits, as Thou hast redeemed us from vanity, and bought us not with gold and silver, mean and corruptible things, but with the precious blood of the pure and spotless Lamb, Jesus Christ, our Lord (1 Peter I, 19).

II. POINT.

"The children of the kingdom shall be cast into exterior darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Mat. VIII, 12). A terrible sentence, calculated to inspire terror in the most reckless souls. Of all sins that of ingratitude is the greatest and the most horrible, because it contains infidelity to God, contempt of His grace, resistance to His call and to the divine will manifested to us; all this renders the soul unworthy of mercy. It is in this sense that our Lord says, that there are sins against the Holy Ghost "which shall not be pardoned either in this world or in the other", that is, they do not merit pardon, and they obtain it only with great difficulty; therefore St. Paul said: "It is impossible for those who were once illuminated, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, but have fallen away, to be renewed again to penance" (Heb. VI, 4). What does it profit to be children of the kingdom, chosen souls called by God in preference to so many

others, and loaded with His graces, if by their abuse and contempt of these riches, they merit to be rejected and to be punished forever with the most severe chastisements?

III. POINT.

“All that is written, is written for our instruction” (Rom. XV, 4). The reprobation of the Jews, to which Jesus Christ alludes in this Gospel, is the figure of that of numberless Christians. But more favored than the Jews, who were regarded only as servants, Christians admitted as children to their Father’s table, have reason to fear a more terrible judgment, because they are so much the more guilty as the grace which they abuse is more precious, the lights which they have received are more abundant, the means and the aids to salvation more efficacious; for what ought they not to expect, since he, who knows the intentions of his master, and does not accomplish them, “shall be beaten with many stripes”? (Luke XII, 47). And since the prevaricators of a law of death were severely punished, “how much more should they be”, says St. Paul, “who trample under foot” the new covenant, the precious Blood of Jesus Christ! (Heb. X, 29). The severity of their judgment, and the punishment which will follow, will be in proportion to the enormity of their crime. Fear, adds the apostle, lest God, who did not spare the natural branches (Rom. XI, 20), should cast into the fire those which, grafted by His care, have not produced good fruit. Consider the severity of God towards the Jews, and His goodness towards you, and do not exhaust His inexhaustible patience, lest you be cut off, as well as they. “Let him who thinketh himself to stand, take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. X, 12). O Lord, preserve us from so great a misfortune, sustain us with Thy hand, look upon us in pity, and show us mercy.

Saturday after the Third Sunday after Epiphany.**Edification and good example.****I. POINT.**

Do good not only before God, but also before men.
(Rom. XII, 17.)

We are mutually indebted one to another for good example and edification. This is what the apostle means, when he exhorts us to spread everywhere the good odor of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. II, 14). Our first duty is to please God: His glory is the only ambition which is lawful for us; it should be the end of all our actions; it is the only holy and pure intention, which purifies and sanctifies all our conduct. This same motive should animate all our zeal to practice virtue, not only interiorly, but exteriorly. All this results from the instruction of Jesus Christ: "Let your light so shine before men"; here the obligation to edify them is well established, "that, seeing your good works, they may glorify your Father, who is in heaven" (Mat. V, 16); such is the purity of intention which should direct us in our exterior actions, and banish from them all vain glory. Teach me, Lord, to hide myself from the eyes of men, concealing from them the good which Thou dost inspire and do in me; but teach me, at the same time, to confess Thee freely before men, by the good example of a generous and faithful accomplishment of all my duties, without being restrained by human respect.

II. POINT.

"If it be possible, as much as is in you, having peace with all men" (Rom. XII, 18). St. Paul, after having exhorted us to edify our neighbor, wishes us, moreover, to labor to maintain an unalterable peace with all: we should do all in our power, and spare no

effort to secure it; and, first, we ought to live in such a manner, that our life may be irreprehensible, that we may not be an occasion of scandal to any one. We should endeavor, by patience and all kind services, to procure and maintain the union and concord which ought to reign among the children of one Father. "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Mat. V, 9), said our Lord, that is, those who preserve, who procure and who inspire peace, and who establish it everywhere as far as they can; for not all are capable of receiving it; therefore, Jesus said to His disciples: If men render themselves unworthy of this peace which I send you to announce to them, "it shall return to you" (Mat. X, 13). O Jesus, "Prince of peace" (Is. IX, 6), establish it in my heart, and enable me to bear it and communicate it to others, that, according to Thy promise, I may merit to enter into the adoption of the children of God.

III. POINT.

"Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. XII, 21); "all who will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. III, 12). The Holy Ghost warns us of this in many places of the Scriptures: "When Thou comest to the service of God, prepare thy soul for temptation" (Eccli. II, 1); let us not wonder, let us not lose courage, if, in the exercise of good works, in the pursuit of this precious peace which comes from God, we meet with obstacles; we are often thwarted by the envy and malice of men in the practice of virtue, but let us not then be overcome by evil, let us persevere more and more in justice: "I was peaceable with them that hate peace" (Ps. CXIX, 7), said David, speaking in the person of our Lord; my penance and the sorrow of my soul made me the object of their mockery, but for love of Thee, I have suffered

this reproach (Ps. LXVIII, 10), and whilst they were insulting me, Lord, I addressed my prayer to Thee for them. Let us learn from the Son of God to suffer, to persevere and to pray, for it is by imitating His example, and by following the motions of His grace, that we shall not be overcome by evil, but we shall overcome evil by good.

Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany.

"Save us, Lord, we perish."

I. POINT.

*"They came to Jesus, and awaked Him, saying:
Lord, save us, we perish" (Mat. VIII, 25).*

Jesus desires to save us more than we can desire it ourselves; therefore He came down from heaven to us, and did such great things, submitting to unheard of sufferings. As the sun distributes its benign influences over the whole earth, and fertilizes it, wherever it finds no obstacle; so Jesus, the true Sun of Justice, enlightens, warms, justifies, sanctifies all who do not oppose His beneficent will, and He would save all sinners, if their malice did not withdraw them from the operations of His grace. O Jesus, satisfy Thy extreme love by saving our souls; destroy by Thy powerful goodness all that opposes Thee, and make the fruits of our good works abound more and more.

II. POINT.

"Lord, save us." The apostles addressed themselves to Jesus as their only refuge. To whom should we have recourse amid the winds of temptation and the various afflictions of this life, if not to Him alone! Jesus, the secure support of our confidence which should never fail, wishes to be awakened; He wishes to be importuned; let us say to Him with the prophet: "Arise,

why sleepest Thou, O Lord? Arise, and cast us not off unto the end" (Ps. XLIII, 23). When we are deprived of all human assistance, Jesus is pleased to give us His divine aid; He does not abandon us in our need; but when everything fails us, then He shows forth His power and goodness with greater splendor; He revives our hope: often He permits evils to press upon us on all sides, to compel us to go to Him, says St. Gregory. O Jesus, without Thee our loss is certain; without Thee we cannot avoid the shipwreck of sin and eternal ruin. Come then, "make haste to help" us (Ps. LXIX, 2), come, Lord, for without Thee we perish.

III. POINT.

"Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" (Mat. VIII, 26.) Let us feel keenly this gentle reproach of Jesus. The mercy of the Saviour exceeds the misery of the sinner; His providence is wonderful, and His conduct towards His servants admirable; He permits them to be assailed, but not to be vanquished; to be exercised, but not to be overcome by temptation. As formerly, when all had perished by the deluge, and the olive tree alone had preserved its verdure, so in the loss of all human support and resources, our confidence in Jesus should be constantly renewed; and if, in his vanity, one of the ancients dared to say to his frightened mariner: "Why dost thou fear, thou carriest Cæsar and his fortune"; why should not we, with more reason, say to our soul with humble courage: Why dost thou fear, afflicted soul, thou dost bear Jesus and His cross; His cross will bear thee, and He Himself will save thee. "O God, Thou art our refuge, our strength and helper" (Ps. XLV, 1): though all the earth should be troubled and in confusion, we will fear no evil, provided "Thou art with us" (Ps. XXII, 4), because all our hope is in Thee.

Monday after the Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.

Charity towards our neighbor.

I. POINT.

*"Owe no man anything, but to love one another.
Render to all men their dues."*

(Rom. XIII, 8, 7.)

Honor to the king, obedience to his laws, and to those who govern for him (1 Peter II, 13); respect and submission to parents (Eph. VI, 2) and to superiors; fidelity and service to masters, care, foresight and tenderness to children (Col. III, 21), to relatives, to servants; wages to workmen and hirelings. Finally, we must strive not to be in debt to any one; this is an essential part of justice. But, after having fulfilled exactly all our different duties according to our state and profession, being free towards all, we are still bound to all by the indispensable law, and the never-failing duty of mutual charity; this is a tribute which we pay by love, but we are not dispensed from it by having previously loved, because there is no hour or time in which we ought not still to love. This debt is of such a nature, that the more we discharge it, the more it increases; yet it enriches us and adds to the precious treasure, which the rust cannot consume, and which thieves cannot steal (Mat. VI, 20), and with which we acquire a kingdom and eternal happiness.

II. POINT.

"He that loveth his neighbor, hath fulfilled the law" (Rom. XIII, 8). He fulfils it, because the love of the neighbor is the perfection of the supreme law of the love of God, the first and the greatest commandment, the source and summary of all the others. For this reason St. Augustine said: "Love, and do what you please." This love of the neighbor which fulfils

the law proceeds, then, from the love of God, for Christ says: "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John XIV, 15); this is My commandment, that you love one another" (John XV, 17). I shall believe that you love Me sincerely, if you love those whom I love, and I regard as done to Myself whatever is done to the least of my brethren (Mat. XXV, 40); therefore, if any one say that he loves God, and, at the same time, does not love his brother, he is a liar (1 John IV, 20). All will verify the truth of these words, when at the judgment they shall be rewarded or punished in proportion to the good or evil that they have done to their brethren. O Jesus, my Judge and my Sovereign King! Grant that, practising charity and mercy here below, I may merit to receive it from Thee in the last day, and to be placed at Thy right hand with the blessed of Thy Father.

III. POINT.

St. Paul, after having proposed to the Romans several commandments, concluded by saying: If there are any others, they are all comprehended in this, "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Rom. XIII, 9). God, who gave this law to us in the Old Testament, in conformity with it says to us through Jesus Christ, His Son, in the New Testament: "All things whatsoever you would that men should do unto you, do you also to them" (Mat. VII, 12). This, then, is our rule and the measure of our charity: Let us love our brethren as ourselves, let us be as attentive to their interests as to our own; let us sincerely desire for them the same spiritual and temporal goods for this life and for the next, as we desire for ourselves; let us have the same care, the same zeal for their salvation, their reputation, their honor, their health, their happiness, as we have for our own; let us labor for them, each one according

to his state, even more faithfully than for ourselves, and let us not fear to lose our goods and advantages by sharing them. God, who is faithful, liberal and all powerful, whose will we accomplish in loving those whom He has adopted as His children, whom He has given us for our brethren, and destined with us to the possession of eternal glory, will reward us for what we shall have done for our neighbor.

Tuesday after the Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.

Obligation to follow Christ.

I. POINT.

“When Jesus entered into the boat, His disciples followed Him.” (Mat. VIII, 23.)

When Jesus has once entered into our hearts, when He dwells there by faith, and is present there by sanctifying grace, we follow Him with the disciples. And, if we are with Him, what have we to fear? He is the way, the truth and the life; following Him, we cannot go astray; believing Him, we cannot be deceived; being united to Him and possessing Him, we cannot die. He is the way by which we must walk in imitating Him; He is the truth which we must hear in obeying Him; He is the life which we must hope for, and which we can secure only by dying to self; for “in Him”, says St. Paul, “we live, move and have our being” (Acts XVII, 28). O Jesus, be the soul of my soul, the moving spring of my conduct and of all my actions.

II. POINT.

Jesus, from the first moment of His abode on earth, and during the whole of His laborious and mortal life, till the last moment when He surrendered His soul to His Father, traced out for us a perfect model of conduct. Follow Me, said He (Mat. IV, 19); “if any one

will come after Me, let him deny himself, let him take up his cross daily and follow Me" (Luke IX, 23). We ought to begin, to continue and to end our life according to this model; we ought to clothe ourselves with Jesus, passible and a traveller, conforming ourselves entirely to Him, following the exhortation of the apostle: "Be ye clothed with Jesus Christ" (Rom. XIII, 14). May our life imitate and honor the life of the Son of God; our pains and afflictions, His pains and sufferings; our words and our actions, what He said and did, that our whole life may be sanctified and deified by the faithful and continual imitation of His, by our perfect union with Him.

III. POINT.

If God had not become incarnate, we should be obliged only to obey and adore Him, because of His ineffable greatness, and as our Creator, our Preserver, our Benefactor; but since He has become man, we are bound, moreover, to imitate Him; therefore, we ought not to undertake or begin anything without raising our hearts to Jesus, to make Him the object of our piety, the source, the motive and model of our actions, since He became the companion of our pilgrimage only to show us by His example the way to heaven. Jesus is "the life" (John XIV, 6), and all that is in Him is life (John I, 4), and the source of life and action; on the contrary, we are, of ourselves, in a state of death, and incapable of producing works of life: it is impossible for a nothing to give itself being; therefore, it is necessary for us to be united to Jesus by love and imitation, that we and our works may be vivified by Him, and that we may become worthy of life and the eternal inheritance.

Wednesday after the Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.

Jesus asleep during the tempest.

I. POINT.

"Jesus was asleep" (Mat. VIII, 24).

The mysterious sleep of Jesus during the tempest is a lively picture of His treatment of souls; for He seems often to withdraw from them, to abandon them, to permit them to encounter difficulties and dangers, that they may have a higher esteem for His grace, that they may submit to His designs, desire His presence and feel the need of His assistance. He tries and exercises their patience, their fidelity and humility, to convince them more and more that they can do nothing of themselves, and that God alone can and will aid them in their necessities; let us, then, accustom ourselves to depend on His almighty will, and to trust entirely to His fatherly goodness. Let us wait for the Lord with courage: if He delays a little, wait for Him; for He will certainly come. O power and goodness of God, immovable support of our hope!

II. POINT.

Jesus seems sometimes to abandon us for a time, in order to preserve us for eternity, according to these words: "He that shall lose his life" in this world, "shall save it" and keep it for eternal life (Luke IX, 24). He leaves His followers in affliction, He wishes them to be proved by tribulation, in order to increase, to perfect and crown their virtue. "Whom the Lord loveth, He chastiseth" (Heb. XII, 6); He orders that the just shall suffer for a time, but all "the sufferings of this time", says St. Paul, "are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us" (Rom. VIII, 18), for a single moment of this glory would be sufficient to compensate us for millions

of years of labors and torments; and St. Francis de Sales says: What does it matter whether the fleeting moments of this life be happy or unhappy, provided we be blessed for eternity?

III. POINT.

Finally, Jesus permits us to fall by our misery, in order to raise us up by His sweet and powerful mercy. He wishes human consolations and assistance to fail us, that He may render His own more present and efficacious. "Put not your trust in princes, in the children of men, in whom there is no salvation" (Ps. CXLV, 2, 3). Rather blessed is he who puts his hope in God, for he will not be disappointed; he, on the contrary, who leans upon an arm of flesh (Jer. XVII, 5), shall perish with what is perishable. But when and how will the Lord deliver him, who seeks Him and trusts in Him? Jesus said: "It is not for you to know the times or moments which the Father hath put in His own power" (Acts I, 7); let us leave Him to dispose of all, let us abandon ourselves to His paternal care and merciful providence; let us depend upon Him and submit to Him always, in all things. O Jesus, the only expectation and support of my soul! Treat me according to Thy good pleasure, and "deal with me according to Thy mercy" (Ps. CXVIII, 24).

Thursday after the Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.

Christ's power to restore peace and calm.

I. POINT.

Jesus "commanded the winds, and the sea, and there came a great calm" (Mat. VIII, 26).

All creatures hear the voice of their Creator; they feel the majesty and power of the supreme Author of all things. Everything upon earth, in heaven and in

hell, is subject to Him, bends under His laws and obeys His commands. "He calleth the light, and it cometh to Him trembling" (Baruch III, 33); the stars, rejoicing to give light to Him who made them, answer: Behold us here! He commands the storm and the tempest, and fair weather succeeds the confusion of the elements. "Who is this, whom the winds and the waves obey?" (Mat. VIII, 27). It is He, who prescribes bounds to the ocean beyond which it cannot pass; He who created the heavens and formed the earth with all that it contains; who balanced it upon its own centre, and who draws the winds from His treasure-house (Ps. CIII, 5); it is Thou, O Jesus, "without whom was made nothing that was made" (John I, 3); and whose power is without limit, whose wisdom is without cloud, and whose mercy is always infinite towards those who fear Thee.

II. POINT.

If Jesus has absolute empire and supreme authority over all that exists; all that the world contains, and all that is in heaven and on earth, has power, then, only to accomplish His will, and a happy inability to transgress His orders, or resist Him, so that the Man-God can dispose of all, according to His good pleasure. But what should cover man with shame and confusion, is that he alone strives to resist God, rebels against Him, and dares to check the course of His mercy and the effects of His goodness. O inconceivable wonder, that the sinner should use his light and his liberty against Him who gave them to him, and that he should persist in destroying himself, in spite of his loving Benefactor. O Jesus, deprive me of the power to resist Thee, take from me the fatal liberty to stray from Thee; leave me power and liberty only to obey Thee, and to attach myself to Thee forever.

III. POINT.

Jesus awoke; "He commanded the winds and the sea" (Mat. VIII, 26); He subdues the pride of the waves, He restrains and calms the angry billows. Thus He gives tranquillity after trouble, peace after war, the crown after the combat, repose after labor. "God is faithful", says St. Paul, "He will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able" (1 Cor. X, 13). But what are the feelings of the soul, when she is visited by Jesus! What a difference between her anguish and her consolation! What peace, what sweetness, when Jesus calms the winds of temptation, when He stills the waves; when He makes sunshine succeed to the storm, and, finally, when He causes Himself to be seen and felt by the soul, and enables her to say with David: Lord, in proportion to the different sorrows that have afflicted me, Thou hast multiplied Thy consolations. Enter into my soul, O Lord, calm the rebellious passions that agitate it, subject them to Thy holy love, may it alone rule and triumph, may it subdue all Thy enemies, who are mine also.

Friday after the Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.

Suffer in order to imitate Christ.

I. POINT.

"His disciples followed Him" (Mat. VIII, 23).

The whole life of our Saviour was divided into two states: the one in the exterior, but transient communication of the splendor of His divinity to His holy humanity, and the beatitude of His soul to His passible body, as He appeared in the working of His miracles, and in the manifestation of His glory on Thabor; the other state, much more lasting, was a state of privation and suspension of His power and glory, which appeared

especially in the Crib and on the Cross. Therefore, to imitate Jesus, and to conform ourselves to Him, the occupation of our life should be prayer and self-abnegation: prayer, in order to raise us to Him, and to receive the divine infusions of His grace; abnegation, to honor His privations by ours, and in thus honoring them, to root out our vicious inclinations; for the more empty we are of self, the more we are filled with God. Let us, then, make room for the Sovereign Master, and He will fill us with Himself.

II. POINT.

As Jesus submitted to all the will of His Father, and wished punctually to accomplish all His designs, whatever difficulties He might encounter; we ought, after His example, to accept humbly, to embrace willingly, and receive gratefully, as a manna from heaven, the crosses, the trials, the sufferings which it pleases Him to send us. We ought to acquiesce in all that happens to us contrary to our inclinations, regarding as our happiest days those in which we have received and suffered, with patience and perfect resignation, some cross and humiliation; for the treasure which we shall find and take with us at death, will be that which we have amassed in our afflictions. The apostle says: "Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts XIV, 21). O Cross of Jesus, be all my glory. How sweet and delicious does suffering appear, when it is received and endured with love!

III. POINT.

Jesus, in His hidden and public life, in the Crib, on Calvary, and everywhere, always chose what was the most humble, poor and laborious. "Having joy set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame" (Hebr. XII, 2). "Moses denied himself to be the son

of Pharaoh's daughter; rather choosing", says St. Paul, "to be afflicted with the people of God, than to have the pleasure of sin for a time, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasure of the Egyptians" (Hebr. XI, 24-26). Yet Moses saw only from afar, and in spirit, Him whom he imitated so closely, and whom he expected as his reward. What, then, ought not we to do after the coming of Jesus, we who have before our eyes so many examples which He gave us, so many graces which He merited for us, so many blessings with which He favored us? Is it not just that we should enter into His spirit, preferring, at least in the superior part of our soul, poverty to riches, contempt to honors, sufferings to pleasure? This is the way which the King of heaven chose, His ardent love constraining Him to it: could we choose better than He? O who will not think himself happy to share the lot of his God! O Jesus, may my present and future life be in Thy hands, and be like unto Thine.

Saturday after the Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.

Christ is present to those who suffer for Him.

I. POINT.

"A great tempest arose in the sea."

(Mat. VIII, 24).

This tempest came by the order and permission of Jesus. He intended to prove His disciples, to conquer their distrust, to dispel their fears and to strengthen their faith. God often permits trials and temptations to attack us, in order to make Himself sure of us, to show us our weakness and our need of His grace, to strengthen our patience, to purify and perfect our love, as gold in the crucible. O Jesus, Thou art as good as Thou art powerful to do us good, since not only Thou

dost pour it upon us without our having merited it, but Thou dost not deprive us of it, even when we are most unworthy. Thy goodness, aided by Thy Sovereign power, enables us to find our advantage in our very miseries.

II. POINT.

“Jesus was asleep” (Mat. VIII, 24) in the midst of the tempest. Jesus is present with the saints in their labors, although they do not perceive Him. He does not appear, He remains apart and sleeps, as if He did not see them; He seems to withdraw His lights and graces; but His presence is not the less real, or the less efficacious, because it is less sensible. “Thou didst call upon Me in affliction, and I delivered thee; I heard thee in the secret place of the tempest” (Ps. LXXX, 8). Tempests do not banish Jesus from us: He is sometimes hidden while they are raging, but, if He does not show Himself, He sees our perplexity, our uneasiness and our pains; He sees them and gives us courage, that we may not sink. This is what happened to St. Antony and St. Catherine of Siena; both said to our Lord, thinking that He had abandoned them in temptation: “Where wast Thou, O Lord?” “I was with thee,” He answered, “to strengthen thee in the combat and to crown thy victory.” “I will fear no evil” (Ps. XXII, 4), “O Lord, since Thou art with me”; and if armies rise up against me, “my heart shall not fear”, because I put all my trust in Thee (Ps. XXVI, 3).

III. POINT.

We ought to learn by this conduct of the Son of God towards His apostles, to attach ourselves to Him, because He is good, holy and merciful, worthy of our homage and of all our love, and not because we see Him, feel His support and enjoy the consolations of

His grace. In aridity and interior abandonment, let it suffice for us to know that Jesus is always what He is, that He loves us, that His glory is not diminished by our miseries. Let us be moved by His interests more than by our own, and let us think more of His glory than of our sufferings; let us remember that He sees us in our anguish, that He wills it so, and that He is pleased; He will not leave our fidelity unrewarded, and "our sorrow will soon be turned into joy" (John XVI, 20). It is true confidence to believe in Jesus without seeing Him, to repose in His goodness without feeling it sensibly, to forget ourselves and our self-love, that we may rise to Him, and live only for Him.

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany.

The kingdom of heaven compared to good seed.

I. POINT.

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man who sowed good seed in his field" (Mat. XIII, 31).

There are two kinds of good seed: the goods of nature and the supernatural goods of grace. We must also distinguish two kinds of fields: the first is the world, in which God, the Author of all good, sowed good seed by the creation, for "He saw all things that He had made, and they were very good" (Gen. I, 12). He made "all things in measure, and number, and weight" (Wis. XI, 21). He communicated Himself in making the world by an effect of His goodness, He disposed of everything in nature with admirable wisdom, and there is nothing in all His works that is not good and well ordered; therefore the very excellence of His works manifests His greatness and power (Rom. I, 20). "The heavens show forth the glory of God," says David, "and the firmament declareth the work of His hands"

(Ps. XVIII, 2). O God, we acknowledge Thee and we adore Thee as the source, the cause, the model and the end of all good.

II. POINT.

The second field is our soul, and Jesus Christ, our Lord, is he who sowed the good seed of grace, of faith, of His holy love, of the precepts and the evangelical counsels, of the vocation to His service and to the state of perfection. This is what He did during His mortal life, calling some, healing others, forgiving sins, and sanctifying souls. This is what He still does every day, and what He will never cease to do by the secret influence of His graces. O Jesus, Author of all good counsels, of all holy thoughts, Thou "from whom cometh every perfect gift" (James I, 17), prepare the field of my soul, and make it fit to receive Thy divine seeds; root out the vices and all the plants of self-love, that Thy holy virtues and pure love may become deeply rooted therein forever.

III. POINT.

The Son of God is, then, he who sows, and by His liberality spreads throughout the universe the riches and all the blessings that we receive. He wishes the seed, which He sows, to serve entirely for the sanctification and the spiritual good of man; for He made all things for man, and man for Himself alone. Therefore He planted in his soul the seed of knowledge and love, by His word and His grace; but all these favors are not sufficient for His immense charity. After having prepared our hearts and our bodies by the first graces, He fills them with Himself, and nourishes them with His sacred Flesh, that it may become in them a germ of life and immortality, a seed of holiness and of a glorious resurrection. He waters the field of our souls with His

precious blood, the wine which produces virgins (Zach. IX, 17), which inebriates with a holy and pure intoxication, makes us forget and lose sight of earthly objects, and happily changes us and transforms us into Himself. O Jesus, what more couldst Thou have done to render the land of our souls fertile and productive? How many graces, how many favors hast Thou not bestowed! But where are the fruits? Make us at last produce such as are worthy of Thee and of eternal life.

Monday after the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany.

Vigilance necessary to resist temptation.

I. POINT.

*"While men were asleep, His enemy came and
oversowed cockle among the wheat."*

(Mat. XIII, 25.)

The devil is the enemy that does not sleep, but is ever on the watch to destroy us; yet, as he would have no power over us, were he not seconded by the corruption of our hearts, it is still truer that man is himself his first and most dangerous enemy; a hidden enemy, a domestic enemy, an enemy that is loved, nourished, listened to, carefully sustained; an enemy, ungrateful to God and a traitor to himself, who is deceived by self-flattery, and lost by self-loving, according to Christ's words: "He that loveth his life, shall lose it" (John XII, 25). But it is especially the sinner who is the enemy of Jesus; for Jesus builds, and the sinner destroys; Jesus sows the good seed, and the sinner tramples it under foot, roots it out, and sows cockle in its place. What a fatal opposition of our malice to the goodness of God, of our perfidy to His patience and mercy, of our ingratitude to His love! O Jesus, destroy sin and convert the sinner.

II. POINT.

“While men were asleep, the enemy came” (Mat. XIII, 25). Our enemies surprise us while we sleep. It is in the fatal moments of our sloth, and when our charity grows cold, that they steal our treasures; then the devil without, and the man of sin within, “the old man” (Rom. VI, 6), the depraved, malicious, corrupt will, awake, and taking advantage of our drowsiness, they sow in our hearts thoughts, desires, inclinations and vicious habits, which grow and produce poisonous fruits—aversion and contempt for the things of God; and the tares choke the good seed. O Jesus, who dost command us to watch and pray always, deliver us from cowardice, indifference, sloth, and all the evils into which they have caused us to fall: give us fervor, vigilance, fidelity to Thy graces and our vocation, childlike fear, and humble distrust of ourselves.

III. POINT.

“While men were asleep.” There is a sleep of death which is the profound lethargy, the fatal forgetfulness of God and eternal truths, in which sinners live in fancied security, so that St. Paul thus addresses them: “Rise, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead” (Eph. V, 14). They who fear and serve God, do not sleep this fatal sleep; but they are in danger of falling into it, when they repose in that other sleep, of which the psalmist said: “My soul hath slumbered through heaviness” (Ps. CXVIII, 28) in languor and depression. And what are this languor and depression of soul, if not coldness in the love and service of God, indifference to good and to virtue, infidelity to our vocation, sloth, negligence and too much self-confidence? O Jesus, who didst say: “Lazarus, our friend, sleepest, but I go that I may awake him” (John XI, 11), wake

me also. Lord, open and "enlighten my eyes, that I never sleep in death" (Ps. XII, 4).

Tuesday after the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany.

The Word of God produces and preserves good habits.

I. POINT.

"Brethren, be clothed with the bowels of mercy as the elect of God." (Col. III, 12.)

Do not be satisfied with merely speculative virtues, be not content to practise them sometimes or superficially, but possess them habitually: let them be rooted in your heart, let them cover you as with a garment, let them shine forth in your conduct, for thus the beloved of God have bowels of mercy, because they are themselves the works of His mercy. They should be distinguished by their meekness, since they taste how sweet the Lord is (Ps. XXIV, 8); by their humility, for they are destined to that high rank of glory, which is only for the humble; by their modesty, because worldly pride and ostentation are unworthy of their desires; by their patience, knowing that their trials will be short, and that the happiness which crowns them will never end. What a price ought we not to pay, to purchase and merit this character of the beloved of God! O Lord, grant that I may love Thee, that I may attach myself only to what Thou lovest, that I may myself become worthy to be loved by Thee.

II. POINT.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you abundantly, in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual canticles, singing in grace in your hearts to God" (Col. III, 16). As food is necessary to man to support his natural life, so the word of God produces and preserves in us the super-

natural life of grace, as it is written: "Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God" (Mat. IV, 4). To be nourished, sustained and supported by the bread of the word, we must not only hear it, but love it and reduce it to practice; we should place it in our hearts, and engrave it there by love in ineffaceable characters. I have hidden Thy word in my heart, said David, that I may not offend Thee (Ps. CXVIII, 11). When this divine word thus dwells in our hearts, it purifies them and preserves them from sin; it is a weapon of defence for them against their invisible enemies; it enlightens them and guides them in the narrow way, according to the psalmist: "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths" (Ps. CXVIII, 105).

III. POINT.

St. Paul not only wishes the word of God to dwell in our hearts, but also that we should instruct each other mutually, that after having received it as a precious treasure, we might also communicate it to our brethren. Consequently, we have an obligation to render our conversations edifying and Christian; and this is what the psalmist meant, when he said: "Let my soul be enriched and filled with the abundance of Thy grace, and then "my mouth shall praise Thee", and my lips shall bless Thee with hymns of joy (Ps. LXII, 6). If we are true Christians, we are also saints, elect and beloved by God, and of what shall we speak, if not of what we love? Since "from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Mat. XII, 34), if our hearts are filled with God and His love, could we speak of anything else? St. Paul forbids profane discourses, and does not even permit the name of vice to be mentioned among Christians (Eph. IV, 29); and he often invites us to

entertain ourselves with hymns and spiritual canticles. Let it be our consolation to speak of God, after the example of him who said: "Thy justifications were the subject of my song in the place of my pilgrimage" (Ps. CXVIII, 54).

Wednesday after the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany.

God's mercy in mingling the just with the wicked in this life.

I. POINT.

The servants said to the Master: Wilt Thou that we root out the cockle? (Mat. XIII, 28.)

The sinner is unworthy of life, of the goods of this world, and even of the use of creatures, which serve him only in reference to God; so that the creatures, seeing him straying away from the common end of the glory of their Author, would wish not only to refuse him their service, but even to destroy and exterminate him. They say to God in their own way the words which are attributed to the angels: Wilt Thou that we root out the cockle? It is because of the sinner's unworthiness, that Jesus Christ, having wished to bear the appearance and the scorn of his reprobation in order to save him, chose also to be condemned, rejected and abandoned on the cross by all creatures, and even by His Father. O Jesus, by the adorable state of Thy humiliation, spare me that which I have merited by my sins, and which I ought to endure throughout eternity.

II. POINT.

"Thou, O Lord, art sweet and mild, and plenteous in mercy to all that call upon Thee" (Ps. LXXXV, 5). It is by His goodness and mercy that God bears with the wicked when they sin, when they offend Him, when they multiply their iniquities; He does not punish them, in order that they may be converted, according to the

words of the Wise Man: Lord, "Thou hatest none of the things which Thou hast made; Thou overlookest the sins of men for the sake of repentance" (Wisd. XI, 25, 24), and that, by doing penance, they may return to Thee and live. God restrains the ministers of His justice: He does not wish them to root out the cockle; He waits for the sinner, He urges him, He invites him, He solicits him. Be converted, O rebellious children, says He, return to your Father, return to Me; for I am your Spouse, why will you perish, O house of Israel? I will not the death of the sinner, but rather that he be converted and live (Ez. XVIII, 32). O man! exclaims the apostle, art thou then ignorant that the goodness of God waits for thy penance; dost thou thus despise the riches of His benignity, His patience and long waiting? Do not by thy obduracy lay up for thyself a treasure of wrath for the day of vengeance, a day in which God will show forth His justice, and will render to each one according to his works (Rom. II, 5).

III. POINT.

Finally, God leaves the good and the wicked here below on earth, as the good seed and the cockle in the same field. He leaves the good, that, being exercised by the wicked, their virtue may be strengthened and increased by the persecutions they endure; and He leaves the wicked, that, by the prayers and examples of the just, they may be converted and delivered from their sins: thus St. Peter wished the faithful wife to remain subject to her unfaithful husband; that he, being converted and changed by her meekness and good conduct (1 Pet. III, 1), might himself become faithful and embrace the true religion. O Jesus, we adore the designs of Thy love for the good, for their sanctification, and the compassion of Thy heart for the wicked, for

their conversion. How excessive is Thy charity for these, since, according to St. Denis, Thou wouldst be ready to die again for their salvation.

Thursday after the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany.

The wheat gathered into the garner.

I. POINT.

“Gather ye the wheat into My barn.”

(Mat. XIII, 30.)

This is the portion of the saints and the elect of God: they are the true wheat of Jesus Christ, which is to be gathered into the heavenly garner. “I am the wheat of Jesus Christ”, said St. Ignatius the Martyr, “I must be ground by the teeth of the lions, to be made a pure bread, worthy to be offered to Him. “Unless the grain of wheat, falling into the ground, die, itself remaineth alone,” says our Lord; “but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (John XII, 24). The just, during this life, are mingled with the sinners; often they are subject to them; they groan under their unjust power, being the object of their contempt, of their persecutions and their ridicule. By sufferings and redoubled blows the wheat is ground and prepared; by persecutions it dies; by humiliations it is hidden in the ground, afterwards to produce fruits of grace, of holiness and glory. The just, says David, shall pass through many tribulations, but the Lord will finally deliver them from all their distress (Ps. XXXIII, 20).

II. POINT.

Jesus, as the Head of the elect, compares Himself to the grain of wheat. In the Eucharist He is called the Wheat of the elect (Zach. IX, 17); His death is represented there, and He does, in fact, die by a sacramental or mystical death: and, cast into the soil of our

hearts by Communion, He produces in them fruits of life, of love, and of all the virtues. O Jesus, prepare, cultivate, enrich the land of my soul and my body, that it may be worthy to receive Thee, and may bring forth fruit for Thy glory. We are then called with Jesus to participate in His sufferings and death; but it is that we may be admitted to His life and happiness. Now is the time of combats, of labors, of trials; to be followed by repose, the crown and the recompense—blessed end of all our tribulations; price, exceeding great, of all that we have endured; remuneration far above all our deserts, since it will be Jesus Himself in His glory. O sufferings which ought to be pleasing to us, tribulations which we ought to regard as “light and momentary”, because they “work in us the immense weight of eternal glory” (2 Cor. IV, 17).

III. POINT.

“Gather the wheat into My barn” (Mat. XIII, 30). If there is so much sweetness in these words of Jesus: “Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you” (Mat. XI, 28); how much more sweetness will there be in His invitation: “Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!” (Mat. XXV, 34). Then the saints, having become “children of God” by a perfect adoption, will be made “His heirs and co-heirs with Christ” (Rom. VIII, 17): and thus God, without any prejudice to His royalty, makes all, who serve Him, kings. He will give them a kingdom, not upon earth, but in heaven: not for a time, but for eternity; not limited to a little corner of the world, but more extensive than the universe. Then the wicked, at the sight of a change so sudden, convinced that what they had regarded as the ruin of the just, has been

a path to glory, will say within themselves: "We fools esteemed their life as madness, and their end without honor. Behold how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints" (Wis. V, 4, 5).

Friday after the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany.

Temptation unavoidable in this life.

I. POINT.

"His enemy came, and oversowed cockle among the wheat." (Mat. XIII, 25.)

The devil, the old enemy of man, does not cease to sow the tares of vice and sin; he endeavors to choke or corrupt the good seed, that is, good actions, or at least good intentions. Wherefore St. Paul says: "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood; but against principalities and powers" (Eph. VI, 12); that is, against the rebel angels, who seek to make us the companions of their revolt, to involve us in their misery. These implacable enemies do not cease, day or night, to lay snares for innocence, and to sow cockle among the good grain. There is no place so retired, no person so exalted, no state so holy as to be exempt from their temptations. The dangers to which they expose us, are the more terrible, because our eternity is at stake; the combats are continual, with them there is no truce. Who, then, will not have reason to fear and tremble, if Thou, O Jesus, who art called the "mighty God", dost not subdue and overthrow their power! "O God, who art mighty above all", by Thy virtue "deliver us from the band of the wicked" (Esther XIV, 19).

II. POINT.

Jesus is the "strong man armed" (Luke XI, 21), who came to disarm the devil, to take away his spoils,

to bind and chain him, that he might injure only those who approach him voluntarily. The divine Word, subsisting, living and working in His holy humanity, is the strength of God, and God Himself; in consequence of this union, Jesus possesses innocence, holiness, and the fulness of all grace and all virtue. This divine fulness is an impenetrable shield, which repels the poisoned darts of the devil, his temptations, and sin: therefore St. John in the Apocalypse says of Jesus Christ, that "He went forth conquering, that He might conquer" (Apoc. VI, 2), because He is victorious even before the combat, and by His own virtue He triumphs before winning the victory. O Jesus, be always victorious in me, for I can never conquer without Thee.

III. POINT.

Jesus wished to combat and to conquer, not in His majesty, but in the humility of our flesh; not in His power, but in our weakness. "God", says St. Paul, "hath chosen the weak things of this world to confound the strong" (1 Cor. I, 27): what is lower than the Crib, what is weaker than the Cross! Of all the works of God, those which have been the most excellent and admirable, were not made in the splendor of His divinity, but in the abasement of His humanity: the world was created by the power of God; it was more miraculously redeemed by the humiliations of the Man-God; and it was by what was weakest and most humble in Himself, that He conquered the pride of the devil, repressed his audacity and destroyed his empire. O Jesus, I acknowledge Thy greatness in Thy littleness, I adore Thy power in Thy weakness; therefore, I seek no other shield than Thy humiliations, to oppose to the darts of the enemies of my salvation. Make me abase myself with Thee, make me share in Thy humility, that I may share in Thy glory.

Saturday after the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany.

God made man free.

I. POINT.

*Let the good grain and the cockle grow together till
the harvest. (Mat. XIII, 30).*

“God made man from the beginning”, says the Wise Man, “and left him in the hand of his own counsel. . . . He hath set water and fire before thee; stretch forth thy hand to which thou wilt” (Eccli. XV, 14, 17). He calls us, He draws us, He exhorts us, but He does not force us; He attains strongly from one end to the other, but He disposes all things with sweetness (Wis. VIII, 1); He treats man with a kind of respect (Wis. XII, 18), and leaves him his liberty. “Before man is life and death, good and evil; that which he shall choose shall be given him” (Eccli. XV, 18). Therefore Jesus said: “Let both grow”; “let him that is just justify himself still, let him that is holy sanctify himself still, let him that is defiled be defiled still” (Apoc. XXII, 11); let him that commits injustice commit it still, that is, God, who wills and desires the salvation and sanctification of man, does not force his will, and never takes away the power which He has given him to dispose of it at his pleasure.

II. POINT.

If God left to man his free-will, if He left to him the choice of his own lot, He gave him, at the same time, light to discern what is best for him, and grace to choose and embrace it. Why does the sinner change medicine into poison, and the goodness of God into a means of offending Him? What! because God is good and liberal to him, leaving him his liberty, he acts the part of an ungrateful and rebellious child, he uses his liberty and the gifts of God for his own destruction!

But let him know that at the time of the harvest, that is, at the end of the world, each one will reap what he has sown, each one will receive his share, according to the choice that he has made in the world. The tares will be separated from the good grain, the good and the wicked who have lived together here below, enjoying the same goods, will be separated for eternity (Mat. XIII, 49); some will be placed on the right, others on the left: the Lord will come at last, He will bring His reward with Him, to render to each one according to his works (Apoc. XXII, 12).

III. POINT.

“In the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers: Gather up first the cockle into bundles to burn” (Mat. XIII, 30). This is the lamentable fate which awaits the wicked, that is, souls who have choked the divine seed, who have despised grace, and abused the gifts of heaven; they will be taken by the devils, those infernal reapers, and heaped up in confusion; they will be dragged to gloomy dungeons as cursed sheep. They have chosen death instead of life, and death will feast upon them (Ps. XLVIII, 15); they have loved curses, and curses will fall upon them; they have refused blessings, and blessings will be far from them (Ps. CVIII, 18); they shall be delivered to the flames to burn for all eternity, because sins, which are the fuel of this fire, can no more be effaced: this fuel existing always, the fire devouring them will last forever; it shall never be quenched. O confusion! O fire, O eternity, O pleasure of a moment changed into an eternity of sufferings! O insupportable weight of this eternity! Let us not lose sight of these “eternal years” (Ps. LXXVI, 6); let us think of our last end, according to the counsel of the Wise Man, that we may never sin. “Remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin” (Eccli. VII, 40).

Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany.

Christ's humility represented by the mustard seed.

I. POINT.

"The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field." (Mat. XIII, 31.)

This seed, the least of all, which however grows and becomes a great tree, represents to us, according to the most common opinion of the Fathers, humility, a virtue very small in the eyes of the proud, despised and rejected by worldly wisdom, but chosen by divine wisdom and established as the base and foundation of the whole edifice of Christian perfection. Jesus is the man who took the grain of mustard seed, that is, the virtue of humility; He took it, for it was foreign to Him, and how could it be suitable to the Supreme Majesty "who dwelleth in light inaccessible"? (1 Tim. VI, 16). Jesus Christ, being unable to humble Himself as God, and in all the splendor of the eternal glory, came down from heaven, to clothe Himself here below with humility. He chose it for His portion, and, by this choice, He rendered it worthy of the veneration of angels and of men. To what a high degree of glory was it not exalted in His person!

II. POINT.

Jesus took this little seed of humility and sowed it in His field; He sowed it first in His adorable Heart, by the love which He conceived for it, by the esteem with which He regarded it, and by the inseparable union which He wished it to have with Him in all the different states of His life, which, properly speaking, was one continual exercise of humility. His Incarnation was the fruit of this virtue; in it He humbled Himself even to "emptying Himself" (Phil. II, 7). All His great-

ness was concealed under the thick clouds of our weak mortality; He was born among men poor, abandoned, and the least of all; His throne was a crib, His palace, a stable; He remained unknown during thirty years, and was reputed to be a man without learning (Mark VI, 3), the son of an artisan, who gained his living by the sweat of his brow. When He began to manifest Himself by His miracles and preaching, His whole court and suite consisted of twelve poor fishermen, who, like Himself, lived by their labor. What outrages and insults did He not endure from the Jews, until the moment of His ignominious death amid the most cruel torments! Finally, He perpetuates His humility by the marvellous state of humiliation in which He dwells among us upon our altars even to the consummation of ages (Mat. XXVIII, 20).

III. POINT.

Jesus Christ was not contented to take humility for Himself, He wished, moreover, to give it to His friends and disciples, as something infinitely precious. He sowed it in our hearts, after having made it triumph in His own. "Learn of Me," says He, "because I am meek and humble of heart" (Mat. XI, 29). After washing the feet of His disciples, He says to us: I "have given you an example, that you may do as I have done. If I, who am your Lord and Master, have washed your feet (John XIII, 14), how much more are you obliged to render to each other similar services of humility. If, as your Father and physician, I choose to take the medicine which is to cure you, will you refuse to drink after Me from this chalice of salvation? Know, moreover, that, as large trees come from a little seed, hidden and decayed in the ground, so he who humbles himself, shall be exalted; and, on the contrary, he who exalts himself, shall be humbled. Let him, then, who desires

to be the greatest and the first among you, become the servant of all (Mat. XXIII, 11); let him regard all others as his masters, and remember that the Son of man came not to be served, but to serve" (Mark X, 45); because, in fact, humility is the only road which leads to true glory.

Monday after the Sixth Sunday after Epiphany.

God made all things for man.

I. POINT.

"A man sowed in his field."

(Mat. XIII, 31).

Our souls are truly the field and the property of Jesus Christ, which He purchased at the cost of His precious Blood: "You are bought with a great price," says St. Paul (1 Cor. VI, 20). We belong to Jesus Christ, as all things belong to us, and Jesus belongs to God; such is the teaching of the same apostle: "All things are yours; you are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. III, 23). The world is the field which belongs to man by the gift of God. Man is the proper field of Jesus Christ: "All souls are Mine", He says by His prophet (Ez. XVIII, 4); and the eternal Father, speaking to His Son, says: "I will give Thee the Gentiles for Thy inheritance" (Ps. II, 8). In a field there are three things: the land, or the foundation, the trees and the fruit; this is what we find in man. The foundation is his being and his essence; the understanding, the will, and his other powers are as so many trees planted by the hand of God; finally, the fruits are the actions and the works which are produced by them; nothing of all this should serve for the world and the flesh; all belongs to Jesus: man's field must bear fruit for Him alone.

II. POINT.

"Whatsoever you do, in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" (Col. III, 17). To

do and to speak in the name of Jesus Christ, is to labor for Him and refer all to His glory. Man is composed of soul and body; since they belong to Jesus Christ, it behooves us to employ the faculties of both for His glory; the thoughts of our mind should be occupied with Him, the emotions of our heart should be directed only to Him. Our memory ought to be filled with the recollection of His benefits, our understanding should be attentive to His divine perfections, and our will prompt and fervent to conform itself in everything to His. Even our exterior senses should be guided and directed by the spirit and the love of Jesus Christ. If you speak, says St. Paul, use only words of edification; if you act or suffer, show yourselves in all things true servants of God (2 Cor. VI, 4). "Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's" (Rom. XIV, 8): let us, then, live and breathe only for Him, that we may deserve to die in union with Him and in His holy love.

III. POINT.

To act and to speak in the name of Jesus Christ, is to act and speak only by the impulse of the spirit of Jesus Christ, and not by our own spirit, neither of ourselves, nor for ourselves; it is to let Jesus Christ speak and act in us, as if we were only His instruments; in short, it is to be as a tool in His hands, which He may use according to His pleasure for His own glory. The Saviour promised this advantage to His disciples when He said to them: "The spirit of your Father shall speak in you" (Mat. X, 20). The "Holy Spirit", says St. Paul in the same sense, "prays in you with unspeakable groanings" (Rom. VIII, 26), that is, the Holy Ghost Himself inspires these groans in our hearts; therefore no prayer can be granted, no word, no action can be good and pleasing in the sight of God, if this Divine

Spirit is not its source; if it is not done in the name of Jesus Christ, in the name of the Beloved Son, in whom the Father is well pleased (Mat. III, 17). O Jesus, be the object of all my designs, of all my intentions, that, being clothed and animated with Thee, I may with confidence say to Thy heavenly Father: "Lord, look upon Thy Christ" (Ps. LXXXIII, 10), and reject not one who wishes to act only by Him and for Him.

Tuesday after the Sixth Sunday after Epiphany.

The mustard seed represents the Church.

I. POINT.

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man who sowed a grain of mustard seed in his field." (Mat. XIII, 31.)

The field of our Lord is the whole world, which belongs to Him by the right of creation. In a more special manner, it is His Church, which He founded by His power, cultivated by His labors, sanctified by His precious Blood. In its beginnings the Church, like a mustard seed, was small, feeble and without splendor, for it was planted at the death of Jesus Christ, when all seemed lost, and when the fruits of His life and labors appeared to be destroyed; yet Jesus on the Cross bore the Church in His bosom, formed all His designs for it, ordered all its ways, and merited for it His graces. The Church, thus founded by the blood and the death of its Author and Head, was cemented by the blood and immolation of its children, that is, the martyrs. O adorable counsels, hidden designs of my God in the establishment of His Church, admirable providence of Jesus, which teaches us that, receiving our life from His death, we ought to live only for Him! We ought to die every day with Him, to have a share in the supernatural life which He acquired for us by His death.

II. POINT.

The little grain of mustard seed is the preaching of the Gospel, the grace and the perfection of the New Law. Jesus had sown it during His life, but it seemed to be destroyed at His death; it began to live again in His resurrection, and then to grow and increase by the ministry of the apostles. But what were the supports of this infant Church, separated from its Head, persecuted, and the object of the contempt of men? Twelve poor fishermen, ignorant, unknown, rude, without authority, without name, without eloquence. If any one had seen our Lord seated at the well of Samaria (John IV, 6), asking a woman to give Him to drink, or in His Passion betrayed by Judas (Mat. XXVI, 48), denied by St. Peter (Mat. XXVI, 72), and basely abandoned by all His disciples, would he have believed that He, nevertheless, was meditating upon the subjection of the whole world by instruments so feeble, and apparently so ill proportioned to such an enterprise? But is it not in this, O Lord, that Thou dost show Thy power? Thou dost call things that are not as well as those that are (Rom. IV, 17). Thou hast no need of any one, and it belongs to Thee alone, to use for the accomplishment of Thy designs the means that seem most unfit. O Lord, may I follow Thy will, and in all events may I abandon myself to Thy wise Providence!

III. POINT.

“The grain of mustard seed, although the least of all seeds, becometh a great tree, so that the birds of the air rest on its branches” (Mat. XIII, 32). What could be a more striking figure of the Church, so small and so contracted in its beginnings! But in its progress it spread throughout the world, and became the Mother of kings and the Mistress of nations! The people

came in multitudes to seek refuge in its bosom, outside of which there is neither safety nor salvation. The most exalted souls, represented by the birds of the air, repose tranquilly in its shade, and wish to die there. The cross upon which Jesus first brought it forth, is now placed on the brow of monarchs, as the most valued ornament of their diadem. O providence of Jesus over His Church, against which all the powers of hell shall never prevail (Mat. XVI, 18). O Jesus, may I live and die a child of Thy Church; may I constantly give Thee thanks, for St. Augustine says: No one can have God for his Father, who has not the Church for his Mother.

Wednesday after the Sixth Sunday after Epiphany.

Grace and faith are precious seeds.

I. POINT.

“The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed”, sown in a field.

(Mat. XIII, 31.)

If, by every title, we belong to Jesus Christ, our souls ought to be like a field well prepared to receive His divine culture; we ought to let Him labor in us and on us, whether He wishes to plant or to tear up, to sow or to root out. The Lord should dispose of our souls entirely according to His pleasure, as a gardener disposes of the soil of his garden. O Jesus, use the right of Thy sovereignty over me, consult not my inclinations; whatever it may cost me, leave nothing in me that may displease Thee; be the Master of my soul, take away its pride, its self-love and “every plant which Thy heavenly Father hath not planted” (Mat. XV, 13); form my heart according to Thine, sow in it the precious seed of humility and of all Thy holy virtues.

II. POINT.

The grain of mustard seed represents also faith, grace and the spirit of our vocation. Faith is the first of the gifts of God; it is infused into us by baptism, and it becomes fruitful when it leads us to practice good works, without which it perishes and cannot exist, for "Faith without works is dead" (James II, 17). It says to us, as Rachel said to her husband: "Give me children, or I shall die" (Gen. XXX, 1). Grace is also a salutary seed, sown in our souls, which animates, vivifies and nourishes our faith. It justifies and sanctifies us, and imparts merit and value to our good works: without it we can do nothing. Jesus Christ acquired it for us by His precious Blood, and every day He pours it abundantly into our hearts; above all, that grace proper to each one according to his state, with which we must correspond and co-operate faithfully. O Jesus, strengthen my faith! May Thy grace go before me, accompany me and never abandon me; and with its aid may I correspond with the vocation and holiness to which Thou dost call me.

III. POINT.

As the grain of mustard seed has two qualities, the one, that it is the least of all seeds, by which it represents humility; the other, that it has a certain pungency, which represents to us interior fervor; so, these two dispositions of humility and fervor are the most necessary to preserve us in faith and grace, to enable us to co-operate with them, and to render them fruitful and active. This seed, although very small, gradually grows and extends its branches; thus as "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Mat XXIII, 12), so lively faith and true love always increase; for nothing is impossible to him who believes and loves (Mark IX,

22). O Jesus, give me, then, an humble faith and an ardent love for Thee, that I may correspond faithfully to Thy graces; and, since all that I am, and all that I have, come from Thy grace, may I be able to say with Thy apostle, that it has not been vain in me (1 Cor. XV, 10).

Thursday after the Sixth Sunday after Epiphany.

Parable of the leaven.

I. POINT.

“The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal” (Mat. XIII, 33).

This woman of the Gospel represents the uncreated wisdom, which hid in Jesus Christ our Lord the leaven of His divinity, the splendor of His majesty, and the greatness of His supreme power; the three measures of meal represent the obscure birth of the Son of God in the Crib, His ignominious Passion on the Cross, His hidden state and His annihilation in the Most Blessed Eucharist. In all these mysteries He wished to be covered as a sun, first, under the cloud of a mortal flesh, afterwards under the veils of extreme suffering and great opprobrium, and, finally, under the feeble appearances and accidents of bread in the Divine Sacrament. Three admirable retreats, in which Jesus Christ is truly our God, but “a hidden God and Saviour” (Isaias XLV, 15), for He is thus hidden only to save us: therefore we should recognize His presence therein, adore, and imitate Him. “Your life is hidden with Christ in God,” says St. Paul; “but when Christ, your life, shall appear, you shall also appear with Him in glory” (Col. III, 4).

II. POINT.

The three measures of meal also represent the three tabernacles (Mat. XVII, 4), which St. Peter wished to construct on Mt. Thabor, in order to dwell there with Jesus, and which we ought to erect spiritually. The first in our mind, the second in our heart, the third in our senses, there to hide the leaven of grace. In our mind, by a true humility founded upon the knowledge of our weaknesses, of our miseries, of our imperfections; in our heart, by entire resignation, perfect submission in, and unreserved acceptance of the trials and humiliations, interior or exterior, which may come to us; and in our senses, by the mortification of all curiosity, of the vain satisfactions which self-love and pride continually produce in us: a three-fold disposition of an humble and low sentiment of self in the mind, of modesty and mortification in the senses; a necessary disposition to obtain, to preserve and increase grace and the gifts of heaven, and to merit that God may establish His abode in us.

III. POINT.

The grace of God, which comprises all His gifts and all His particular favors, is the treasure hidden in a field, that is, in the secret of our souls; a treasure which we ought to conceal, lest it should be stolen from us. It is a fire which should be covered with the ashes of humility, that it may not be extinguished; it is the leaven mixed in the dough, and as the leaven thus enveloped causes the dough to expand and to rise, so the graces of God increase in us so much the more, as they are better covered under an humble and hidden life; for we ought, above all, to cherish and embrace the retired life, of which the Son of God gave us the example, until obedience shall draw us from our retreat,

and the same spirit of Jesus, which "led Him into the desert" (Luke IV, 1), and sent Him to preach the Gospel to the poor, shall appoint us to the duties of a public life. O my Lord Jesus, Thou who dost "give us to will and to do" (Phil. II, 13), imprint in me the desire to live unknown upon earth and ignored by men.

Friday after the Sixth Sunday after Epiphany.

Christ Himself represented by the mustard seed.

I. POINT.

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field" (Mat. XIII, 31).

This man represents the Eternal Father, who founded His Church upon the annihilation, the suffering and the death of Jesus Christ our Lord, in order to cause it to triumph eternally and gloriously in heaven. The whole life of the Man-God was a continual succession of pains, trials and labors. The elect, who are His members, owe to His love, and to the sufferings which He endured for them, their predestination, their salvation and beatitude. Jesus is like the little seed, which dies alone, and which, in dying, produces a great tree adorned with branches and countless leaves. Therefore, the incalculable number of the just, the predestined, and the children of the Church, who have been, who are, and who will be; all the saints, in a word, who rejoice in heaven, owe their salvation, their exaltation, their sanctification and their felicity to His abasement, to His sufferings and death.

II. POINT.

God has given to plants and trees the power of reproducing themselves by the seed which they bear (Gen. I, 11), and which, being laid in the ground, pro-

duces new trees and new plants. This power of reproduction is an image of the corporal and spiritual resurrection. God the Father delivers His Son to death, that by His death He might be the cause of our resurrection. We have life only by His death; without it we should be condemned and delivered to eternal death; but God laid upon Him the iniquities of us all; He placed Him as a victim to receive the wounds of the fiery darts which, to avenge His infinite Justice, He hurled against sinners. Such is the complaint which Christ makes by the mouth of Job: "All the arrows of the Lord are in Me" (Job VI, 4); and by that of David: "Thou hast made all Thine anger burst upon Me" (Ps. LXXXVII, 8). O Jesus, who for us wast made a sign of contradiction by the justice of God and the malice of men, be the end to which I shall strive to attain with all my strength, that, having come to Thee, I may repose in Thee forever, as in the centre of my eternal happiness and my sovereign good.

III. POINT.

We have received from Jesus Christ all that we are, not only according to nature, but, if possible, still more according to grace, for our natural being, with all that He has given us for its preservation, cost Him only a word; but the supernatural being of grace, which we have, is the fruit and the price of His labors, of His sufferings and death. Is it not just, then, that our life, our labors, and our death should be entirely for Him, and wholly consecrated to His glory? Besides, if our supernatural life finds its source in the death of the Man-God, who is our head, can we hope to preserve it, except by dying with Him? I complete in myself, said St. Paul, what is wanting to the Passion of my Master (Col. I, 24). If the Head was crucified, the members

must be so likewise. What a shame to see delicate members under a head crowned with thorns, exclaims St. Bernard. O Jesus, grant that, with Thy apostle, I may "live crucified to the world" with Thee (Gal. VI, 14), and that I may "die daily" more and more (1 Cor. XV, 31), in order to live for Thee alone.

Saturday after the Sixth Sunday after Epiphany.

God established His greatest works on the naturally weakest foundations.

I. POINT.

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed" (Mat. XIII, 31).

God, who singularly cherishes humility, has established His greatest works upon the weakest foundations, in order to make us recognize and adore His power so much the more, as it is exercised upon the least subjects, and even upon nothing. He made the world from nothing, by His infinite power. This vast globe which contains so many things, is founded and supported upon an imperceptible point, which we call the centre of the earth. All that is outside of God, is not self-subsistent, nor self-sustaining; but is sustained by God alone, without whom it would return to its original nothing. O great God, whose power is without limit, Thou alone art He, who is; Thou hast created all things, and sustainest all that Thou hast drawn from nothing. I am myself drawn from nothing; without Thee I am nothing, and of myself I cannot preserve the being which I have received from Thee; grant that it may be employed only for Thy greater glory.

II. POINT.

The Incarnation, which is the greatest work of God, was established in the annihilation, so to speak, of the Divine Word in our flesh; for thus the apostle

calls this mystery, when he says that Jesus Christ our Lord, being God and equal to His Father, "emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant" (Phil. II, 7). The God of glory became the scorn of the wicked; the Master, the King of kings, the Creator of the universe, was stripped of His power, and His authority seemed to be buried in the abyss of His humiliations; so that humility belongs to Jesus in a special manner, and is peculiar to Him alone. Humility is the virtue of Jesus, and from it we must expect that which St. Paul desired, that "the power of Jesus Christ should dwell" in him (2 Cor. XII, 9). O annihilation of Jesus, be the source, the example, the merit and the motive of humility in our souls.

III. POINT.

The work of our salvation and perfection is founded in humility and self-contempt; without this foundation it could not be accomplished. Do you wish to be great? Begin by making yourself little, says St. Augustine. Do you wish to erect a lofty edifice? Begin by digging very deep, by laying the foundations in the most profound humility; otherwise, the whole building will be overthrown, and soon fall into ruin. O humility, honored and sanctified by all the actions of the life of Jesus, loved by God, respected by men, secure foundation of virtue and source of our elevation and glory, I choose thee this day, and I embrace thee as my support, my defense and my refuge; for true humility serves for all. Happy is he, who knows its necessity and value.

Septuagesima Sunday.

The vocation to salvation is eternal in God.

I. POINT.

“The kingdom of heaven is like unto a householder, who went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard.”

(Mat. XX, 1.)

From the early morning of eternity God began to call us to His glory: “I have loved thee with an everlasting love,” He says; “therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee” (Jer. XXXI, 3). He calls us in this life to His service, with the promise of a reward which He destined for us from that time. The blessing of being called by God and destined to receive His graces, is great and estimable above every other, because it is an effect of the pure mercy and infinite goodness of God, without any merit on our part; finally, because this mercy according to the will of God, which is called antecedent, is general, and extends to all men individually who have been, who are, and who will be. O abyss of charity, O excessive goodness! Who am I, Lord, to be the object of Thy loving designs!

II. POINT.

From the early morning of the creation God called us to cultivate the vineyard of our eternal salvation. Having created us for His glory, and made us capable of knowing and loving Him, He gives us a powerful means in the natural light of reason which reveals to us His existence, and leads us by a sweet impression, engraved in the depths of our heart, to lift ourselves towards Him, to have recourse to Him, as to the Sovereign Author of our being, and to love Him as our supreme good, without whom we cannot be happy, and in whom alone we can find our repose (St. Francis de

Sales). St. Augustine says that our hearts, being created for God, can find no repose till they rest in Him. Creatures may agitate them, but they cannot tranquillize them, still less satisfy them. Therefore God reproaches us for wandering, for running after things here below, and complains by the prophet, that we continually stray away from Him. "They have forsaken Me, who am the fountain of living waters, to dig for themselves broken cisterns, which can hold no water" (Jer. II, 13). "But all who stray from Thee, O Lord, shall perish" (Ps. LXXII, 27). Thou shalt destroy the unfaithful souls who separate from Thee. O Jesus, my only good is to attach myself to Thee, and to place all my hope in Thee.

III. POINT.

Jesus Christ our Lord, from the morning, from the first moment of His Incarnation, even to the end of His life, by His desires, His prayers, His words, His example and His labors, did not cease to call laborers to His vineyard, that is, to invite and to attract men to grace and to evangelical perfection. In the various ages of the world God called them by the patriarchs, by the prophets and the Law; He said to all, in the person of Abraham, the father of the believers: "Walk before Me, and be perfect" (Gen. XVII, 1). But in these latter times, as at the eleventh hour, He sent His only-begotten Son to call us to labor in His vineyard, with the magnificent promise of an eternal recompense, of which He gives us the pledge and the first fruits in the Divine Sacrament of the Altar. He calls us, and will not cease to call us till the end of the world, by the voice of the Church and His ministers, by the lights, the inspirations and motions of His holy spirit. O Jesus, if I am and ought to be entirely Thine, because Thou

hast made me, what do I not owe to Thee for having redeemed me by Thy labors and Thy Blood? Behold me, Lord, ready to obey Thee and to labor according to Thy will.

Monday after Septuagesima Sunday.

All run indeed, but one receives the prize.

I. POINT.

"All indeed run, but only one receiveth the prize." (1 Cor. IX, 24.)

This life is but a race and a passage to a better life. "The days of man are short" (Job XIV, 5); his life passes rapidly; it is like a vapor which rises and vanishes immediately (James IV, 15). His days have passed as a shadow, and his years have flown rapidly away. Sinners, surprised by death, exclaim, in the Book of Wisdom: Of what profit have been our honors, our pleasures, and our riches? (Wis. V, 8). All these things have disappeared as a shadow, as a messenger who runs, as the flight of a bird, of which we can discover no trace, as the arrow which cleaves the air, and of which nothing remains. We ought, then, to regard ourselves as travelers, who, having here below no lasting city (Heb. XIII, 14), aspire unceasingly to the blessed country, not made by the hand of man, but which God Himself has prepared for His elect. Let us not fix our eyes on visible things which are only for a time, but let us fix them on the invisible things which are eternal. St. Francis de Sales says: Consider heaven, and do not exchange it for the earth; consider Jesus Christ, and do not abandon Him for the world; consider eternity, and do not lose it for fleeting moments.

II. POINT.

"All indeed run, but only one receiveth the prize." How is it that only one receives the prize, since there

are so many saints and so many just who are saved? It is true, answers St. Paulinus, that only one wins the prize, because it is Jesus Christ who runs, who reaches the goal, who triumphs in those who run and combat faithfully. He sustains us by His grace and animates us by His example. We are only weak children, whilst He completed His course as a giant (Ps. XVIII, 6). If our weakness takes alarm, and fears to be unable to imitate a God, to be unable to run as He did, and as quickly, St. Augustine encourages us by these words: Be not afraid to undertake this course and to enter into the narrow way, because Jesus Christ, who calls you and commands you to run, to carry your cross after Him and to follow Him, carries you Himself in His arms. Run, He says, but I will carry you. A pious author says: He runs easily, who is carried by the Almighty; he runs with security, who has such a guide. The prophet says: "They that hope in the Lord, shall renew their strength, . . . they shall walk and not faint, they shall run and not be weary" (Is. XL, 31).

III. POINT.

"So run, that you may obtain" (1 Cor. IX, 24). It would profit us little to walk, or even to run in the way of the commandments of God, if we did not win the prize of our course, if we did not run quickly and well enough to attain the goal. Let us then make haste, let us not stop; let us free ourselves, according to the counsel of St. Paul, from everything that weighs us down, from the chains of sin which bind us, and let us run with patience in the course that is open to us (Heb. XII, 1). Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who, instead of the happy life which He could have enjoyed, chose to suffer and endure death. Let us not grow weary in well-doing,

because we shall find repose with Him, in Him and by Him. We shall reap in due time (Gal. VI, 9), if sloth does not now overcome us; let us not be satisfied with a few languid efforts, let us not turn back, for our Lord says: "He who, having put his hand to the plough, looketh back, is not fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke IX, 62); only "he that shall persevere to the end, shall be saved" (Mat. X, 22).

Tuesday after Septuagesima Sunday.

Labor for eternity.

I. POINT.

"Every one that striveth for the mastery, refraineth himself from all things; and they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown."
(1 Cor. IX, 25.)

What will not children of the world undertake, to secure the object of their ambition! St. Paul proposes them to us, as examples to rouse us in our cowardice, and make us blush for our sloth. These men, possessed by worldly passions, do all, undertake all, suffer all, to satisfy them. What labors, what contradictions, what ingratitude must they not endure! To what baseness do they not stoop! what constraint, what dissimulation! How many vigils, journeys, cares, solitudes! And all that for a phantom of honor, vain, frivolous and fleeting, for the uncertain hope of a momentary pleasure, or a delusive advantage, snatched away as soon as it is acquired! For this reason the prophet says: Children of men, how long will you love vanity, and why do you unceasingly seek after falsehood? (Ps. IV, 3). Let us not verify in ourselves what the infallible Truth itself declares to us, that "the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light" (Luke XVI, 8). Be prudent, but for the things of God.

II. POINT.

“We look for an incorruptible crown” (1 Cor. IX, 25). Our ambition ought not to be confined to temporal goods, since we expect those which are eternal. A kingdom which is not of this world, unchanging happiness, peace without trouble, glory without shame and without vanity, laurels that will never wither, the perfect accomplishment of our desires, pleasures pure, innocent and without disgust, this is what is promised to us. “The just shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Mat. XIII, 43), and this kingdom will become their inheritance and their own possession; they will receive it from the hand of God, with a diadem sparkling with beauty (Wis. V, 17). “God will clothe them with a double garment of justice; He will put upon their head a crown of everlasting honor” (Bar. V, 2); “they shall judge nations and rule over peoples” (Wis. III, 8); they shall live and reign eternally with God. Will no one be found to receive such an inheritance? Will not such great promises rouse us from the profound slumber, the sloth and indolence into which we are plunged? St. Augustine says: Alas! the ignorant advance and ravish heaven; and we, brought up and nourished in the bosom of truth, enlightened by the Sun of Justice, we remain unworthily buried in the mire and slime of worldly pleasures and vanity.

III. POINT.

For me, I run, not as uncertain, not as one that beateth the air (1 Cor. IX, 26). “God is faithful in His promises” (Deut. XXXII, 4); “heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away” (Mat. XXIV, 35). This reassured St. Paul, and filled him with a generous confidence. The world, on the contrary, is deceitful: it is itself deceived by the devil,

who is its prince (John XII, 31), as our Lord calls him. You are, said He to the Jews, children of the devil, who is a liar and the father of lies (John VIII, 44). Yet, it is on the false promises of this artful seducer that the world relies; it is upon the frivolous illusions with which he deceives sinners, that they form vain projects, torment themselves, and run through land and sea. But you, children of light, will you do less for truth and for goods that are real, inestimable, certain, and already prepared for the faithful heart, than the children of darkness do for vanity and imaginary goods, which lead them to a real and too certain misery. Will you be less ardent in seeking life, than they are in hastening to their eternal death? Blush with salutary confusion, "redeem the time" (Eph. V, 16) by diligence and renewed fervor; make haste, lose not a moment; he, who runs, sees without looking and does not stop at anything, lest, interrupting his course, he should not reach the goal. Let us run thus, contemptuously closing our eyes to all earthly objects which might retard, or make us lose the victory; let us imitate the apostle and say with him: I think only of stretching forward to what is before me, and "I press towards the mark, to the prize of the supernal vocation of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. III, 14).

Wednesday after Septuagesima Sunday.

God's justice in the choice of His elect.

I. POINT.

"Is it not lawful for me to do what I will?"
(Mat. XX, 15.)

God is not indebted to any one: we cannot demand anything from Him; and who has a right to say to Him: why hast Thou done this? Does the vessel of clay say to the potter: why hast thou made me thus?

(Rom. IX, 20). It is not "by the works of justice which we have done", that Jesus Christ will save us, "but according to His mercy" (Tit. III, 5). O man, who art thou to contest with thy God? (Job IX, 14). Job says: Can He not multiply wounds without giving a reason, and should it not suffice to the creature in all that happens, that it is the will of his God, always just and good, and who has a sovereign dominion and absolute power over all? Must we not confess that all our good comes from Him, and all the evil from ourselves, according to the words which He Himself pronounces: "Destruction is thy own, O Israel; thy help is only in Me" (Osee XIII, 9). Let us, then, rely with confidence upon His loving goodness, and, full of humble and tranquil fear, let us exclaim with the apostle: "O depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways!" (Rom. XI, 33).

II. POINT.

"The first shall be last, and the last shall be first" (Mat. XX, 16). Jesus Christ teaches us by this parable, that the eternal reward is not to be measured by the space of time during which we have labored, but by the labor itself and the work that has been accomplished. St. Paul who came the last into the vineyard of the Lord, assures us that he labored more than all the other apostles (1 Cor. XV, 10). Let us say also that the recompense is due not so much to our labors, but rather to the love and fervor which have inspired them; so that he who has done the least things, but with more ardent charity, will acquire more merit, and will receive a greater reward, than he who has done more, but with less charity. O love of God, which is the weight of the sanctuary, the root of all good and all merit, the life

and ornament of our souls, the value of good works and all virtues, reign in our hearts for time and for eternity!

III. POINT.

“Many are called, but few are chosen” (Mat. XX, 16). If the vineyard of the Gospel represents each one of our souls, each one of us is called to cultivate his own, to make it bring forth fruits for eternal life. But, alas! how few are found to labor efficaciously, and who are numbered among the elect! How small is this number in comparison with that of the reprobate! Who then will not tremble and say with fear: I know not what is written of me in Thy book, O Lord, and I am filled with terror. We are all called, for the apostle says: “God wills that all men shall be saved” (1 Tim. II, 4). But do we not remain “all the day idle” (Mat. XX, 6), if we do not correspond to so high a vocation, if we do not labor in the vineyard of the Lord, each one according to his talent? If we neglect the grace which we received at the hour and the time when we were called, we shall not have the precious penny destined for the laborers. Let us, then, without delay set ourselves earnestly to work; let us exert ourselves with zeal, fervor and perseverance, to procure the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ and the salvation of our souls. Let us love and practise what God commands, and let us be sure that the Father of the family will give us the wages He has promised.

Thursday after Septuagesima Sunday.

The means of salvation abound.

I. POINT.

“Go you also into my vineyard, and I will give you what shall be just.” (Mat. XX, 6.)

The ways, the powerful means by which God has engaged us to love Him, to serve Him, to labor in His

vineyard, that is, to labor for the salvation of our souls by accomplishing His will, are countless, and who can enumerate them? We have felt His inspirations from our youth: then He made us understand that His yoke is very sweet, and He prevented us with His mercies. How many times has He turned aside the occasions of our ruin! He has confided us to the care of His angels (Ps. XC, 11), and has not judged it unworthy of these heavenly spirits, who constantly behold His divine face (Mat. XVIII, 10), to be attentive to our preservation, to protect us, to defend and guide us. He turns all things, even evils, to our greater advantage; in short, there is not an hour nor a moment of our life, in which we are not indebted to Him for a blessed eternity, either because He has preserved us from sin, which alone could render it unhappy, or because He presents to us His grace that we may merit His glory. Lord, Thou dost command us to labor; but is it not Thou Thyself, who dost labor in us and for us, preventing us by so many benefits, the least of which would be sufficient to recompense justly and worthily all the toils of the longest life?

II. POINT.

God, as the Father of the family, full of goodness and vigilance, sending us to labor in His vineyard, furnishes us with tools and instruments necessary to cultivate it and render it fruitful. These are the graces which are found especially in the holy sacraments, — sacred channels by which these salutary waters are abundantly poured into us. These graces are first given to us by baptism, with the gifts of the Holy Ghost and the theological virtues. We are then happily snatched from the power of the devil, made children of God, heirs of His glory, brethren and “co-heirs with Jesus Christ” (Rom. VIII, 17). In the other sacraments we

find weapons to combat, strength to defend ourselves, powerful and efficacious aids to fulfil the commandments of God, a sacred bath to wash the stains from our souls, finally, a delicious and heavenly food which, as it were, changes and transforms us into God, according to these words of Jesus Christ to one of His saints: I shall not be changed into you, but you shall be changed into Me. This change is produced by the Eucharist. In this Sacrament, the holiest and most august of all, since it contains the Author of all holiness, we find all graces, all favors united, and we ought to exclaim, full of love and gratitude, that it is pre-eminently the summary as well as the masterpiece of all the wonders of the Almighty.

III. POINT.

God gives us His gifts in time, only to crown them in eternity in souls that co-operate with them faithfully; therefore He says: "I will give you what is just" (Mat. XX, 4). It is not enough for His love to give us temporal graces; He promises and prepares for us immortal crowns. He will say to His elect: "Possess ye the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Mat. XXV, 34). He destines for those who love Him, and who shall persevere to the end in laboring in His vineyard and practising good works, a happiness, a glory, a felicity, which the eye of man hath not seen, which his ear hath not heard, and which his heart cannot comprehend (1 Cor. II, 9). But is it not sufficient honor for us, O Lord, that Thou dost order us, or dost even permit us to love Thee, without attaching to it such great rewards, without promising to us for labors, short and easy, a rest which shall have no end. This thought, my God, fills Thy saints with gratitude, and induces them to proclaim, in transports of joy, that Thou dost save them gratuitously, that they have para-

dise for nothing (Ps. LV, 8). O infinite Goodness! Where is the heart so hard as not to love Thee?

Friday after Septuagesima Sunday.

Our soul is a vineyard.

I. POINT.

"Go you also into My vineyard."

(Mat. XX, 7).

Our souls are the vineyard of the Lord: He has confided the care of them to us; He orders us to cultivate them, that they may bring forth fruits worthy of Himself. To prepare a vineyard to give an abundant harvest, it must be pruned, trimmed and cultivated by repeated labors, with rich fertilizers. This is what we must do spiritually in our souls: we must search our hearts, we must penetrate their deepest and most hidden recesses, to root out vanity, corruption and malice, and give them all the attention they need, that they may bring forth fruits of virtue. But after all this care, we must acknowledge that we cannot, of ourselves, purify the soil, and render it good and fertile, and capable, without the grace of Jesus Christ, of producing the fruit of good works, as He Himself assures us: "Without Me you can do nothing" (John XV, 5). As the branch of the vine cannot bring forth fruit, unless it is attached to the trunk, so you cannot produce fruit, unless you abide in Me. O Jesus, without Thee I am nothing, I can do nothing, I have no capacity, except to hasten my ruin. If I am separated from Thee, I shall be only a dry and sterile twig, fit to be cast into the fire. Unite me, then, to Thee inseparably and forever.

II. POINT.

"Go you also into My vineyard." Our souls are represented by the vineyard, planted by the hand of

God, for which Jesus endured so many sufferings. Why have they hitherto produced only bitter fruit? He complains of this in these terms: O My chosen vineyard, elect and beloved, what more could I have done for thee, that I have not done? Whence comes it, then, that thou hast produced only wild grapes? (Is. V, 4). I expected fruits of justice, and I see only iniquity. What can we do to repair our ingratitude and our criminal abuse of so many divine favors, except to efface by our tears the shameful stains of our evil deeds. Let us groan, let us weep, let us shed tears of love and repentance. Alas! we shed so many tears over the loss of a friend, or of some temporal good; why do we not lament the loss of our soul and our God? My bread is moistened with my tears (Ps. XLI, 4), every night my bed is watered with my tears (Ps. VI, 7), said the penitent king. "Who will give me a fountain of tears" (Jer. IX, 1), O Lord, to weep over my offences and my withdrawal from Thee! Do Thou Thyself produce these salutary waters of fervent compunction in the depths of my heart; and if my tears are not sufficiently pure and abundant, supply for them with Thine, O Lord, and with the blood which Thou didst shed, a blood of infinite value, sufficient to purify a thousand guilty worlds, and to extinguish all the flames of hell.

III. POINT.

Jesus Christ, who calls each one of our souls His vineyard, does not disdain to say that He is Himself the Vine, and that His Father is the Vinedresser (John XV, 1). My Father, said He, will cut off all the branches, which do not bring forth fruit in Me, and He will prune those that bear fruit, that they may produce still more. We should fear lest, being united to Jesus by

so many bonds, we should be dry and sterile twigs, or dead members in His mystical body. If we wish to avoid this misfortune, let us abandon ourselves to the Lord as to a charitable physician; let us acknowledge that we are sick, that our souls, soiled and infected by sin, continually send forth unworthy productions, and that they must be cut, pruned and trimmed to make them bear fruits of justice and holiness. Let us permit Him to act and labor in us; let us labor and co-operate with Him; let us cut off, by mortification and penance, all the dangerous and criminal superfluities of our desires and passions; let us suffer pains and afflictions with patience, and let us make of them the use for which He sends them. He wishes to correct and extinguish our cupidity, to establish us in charity. Let us remember that when the Lord smites us, it is a sign that He loves us. He says to us: I reprove and chastise those whom I love; have zeal and do penance. "He hath proved them as gold in the furnace," says the Wise Man (Wis. III, 6), "and hath found them worthy of Himself" (Ibid. v. 5).

Saturday after Septuagesima Sunday.

Work is a penance for sin.

I. POINT.

"Why stand ye here all the day idle?"

(Mat. XX, 6.)

"Man is born to labor" (Job V, 7); God has condemned him to it for his sins: "Thou shalt eat thy bread in the sweat of thy brow" (Gen. III, 19). Jesus Christ, who came to expiate our sins, and to satisfy the justice of His offended Father, chose during His whole life to practise the penance imposed on the sinner: and this sovereign King, this Master of the universe, did not

disdain to spend thirty years in the exercise of a mechanical trade; therefore the people, astonished at His wisdom, said to each other: "How doth this man know letters, having never learned?" (John VII, 15). "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?" (Mark VI, 3). O divine labors, precious sweat, sufficient to efface all the sins of the world! O example of humility, of labor, of penance in Jesus, which condemns the criminal sloth in which the greater part of men live, and which is the source of numberless vices. Grant, Lord, that we may watch unceasingly, that we may labor always, and that we may desire repose only in the future life.

II. POINT.

To avoid the reproach of the householder, it is not sufficient for us to have our occupations; they must be directed to accomplishing the work which He has confided to us,—our salvation. The affairs which are called great and important among men, if they do not tend to this end, are regarded by God only as idleness, at the most, as childish amusements, which will not endure. Men of the world, says David, have slept, and, awakening after their sleep, that is, at the hour of death, they found themselves empty-handed (Ps. LXXII, 20), when leaving the world for which they had labored so much, to enter into that eternity, for which they had done nothing. In this sense, he says elsewhere, that all men "have become unprofitable", because "there is not one that doth good" (Ps. XIII, 3). One labors to gratify his avarice, another to satisfy his ambition, or to procure for himself empty pleasures: he consumes his life in labor, but for nothing, or only to do works of straw, which will be the food of the flames (1 Cor. III, 13), according to the saying of St.

Paul, because they are all either sinful, or at least useless for salvation.

III. POINT.

“Why stand ye here all the day idle?” (Mat. XX, 6). The day means our life, which is less than a day compared with the eternity of God. “A thousand years are in Thy sight as a day, as yesterday which is past and gone” (Ps. LXXXIX, 4). But this day of the present life, so short in itself, leads us to an endless eternity, which will be happy or unhappy, according to the use which we have made of the moments that have preceded it: moments, consequently, very precious, which we ought to use carefully, because, having once passed away, they return no more; because Jesus Christ has acquired them for us at the price of His blood, and because there is not one that may not merit for us an eternal reward; moments of which we shall render to God an exact and rigorous account, when we have reached their end; and is this end still remote? Whilst these moments last, let us profit by the reproaches of the Householder: Why stand ye here idle? Let us listen to His voice, let us not harden our hearts (Ps. XCIV, 8); let us labor in His vineyard, and render our days full before Him, lest when there shall be no more time, we should hear these terrible words: “Thou hast the name of being alive, and thou art dead; for I find not thy works full before my God” (Apoc. III, 1). Let us prevent this misfortune by employing most conscientiously the perishable moments of life, that they may be to us a path to eternal bliss.

Sexagesima Sunday.

Christ came to sow in us the seed of grace.

I. POINT.

"The sower went out to sow his seed."

(Luke VIII, 5.)

Jesus our Lord went forth from God His Father by the Incarnation. He calls this mystery—a going forth: "I came forth from the Father, and I am come into the world" (John XVI, 28). "His going out", said David, "is from the end of heaven" (Ps. XVIII, 7); and this is also the object and the end of His career: "I came forth from the Father . . . again I leave the world, and I go to the Father" (John XVI, 28): an admirable end of the going forth and the return of Jesus, which is the bosom of the Father! Jesus went out from Himself in becoming man, humbling His majesty so far as to unite Himself to the human nature, infinitely inferior to His own, and the work of His hands. If He thus went forth from Himself, it was to come to us: let us then also leave ourselves, to go to Him. And is not this the least that we can do, to show our love and gratitude! Let us destroy our self-love, that His love may reign in our hearts. He came forth from God and goeth to God, says St. John (John XVI, 28). However vile, however contemptible we may be, we came from God, His hands have formed us (Job X, 8), we hold from Him alone being, motion and life, both in the order of nature and in that of grace; let us return, then, to Him as to our first source, let all the moments of our life be so many ascending steps raising us and leading us to Him.

II. POINT.

Jesus went forth to sow His seed in our souls; He came from heaven, and what could He bring us thence,

but heavenly desires, sentiments and affections? He came forth from the bosom of God, "who is a consuming fire" (Deut. IV, 24), a furnace of love and charity; and what else could He bring thence than this sacred fire, which He said, He came to cast upon the earth? "What do I will but that it be kindled" (Luke XII, 49), and should inflame all hearts? Finally, this substantial and eternal Word came forth from the bosom of His Father, to speak to us, to impart to us the knowledge of His will and commandments, to sow in us the seed of His instructions and infuse the lights of His Gospel. O Jesus, Sun of Justice, who can escape from Thy divine heat? Grant that our hearts, being warmed in a holy manner, may be consumed in the sacred flames of Thy pure love; detach them from all things here below, that, according to the counsel of Thy apostle, we may taste the things of heaven, and no longer those of earth (Col. III, 2). Plant in us Thy holy maxims and render our souls a fertile land, which will bring forth fruit a hundred-fold.

III. POINT.

The priests as God's messengers and vicars in this world, clothed with the priesthood and with the authority of Jesus Christ, sow different seeds in souls. In holy Communion they sow Jesus, the divine germ of immortality, the seed of eternal life, of all holiness, of all perfection, of which He is the author, the beginning and the source. By preaching they plant the seed of the word of God, of faith, of truth and the knowledge of salvation. The priests of the law "keep knowledge" (Mal. II, 7); to them the treasure of doctrine is confided. By the administration of the sacraments, they plant in souls the grace and merits of Jesus Christ. O holy and sacred ministry, which should be

exercised with zeal, with fear and humility; but it should be always regarded with as much esteem as respect and devotion, according to these words of St. Paul: "Let men so account of us as ministers of Christ and dispensers of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. IV, 1). Let us never touch the anointed of the Lord; nor launch our evil darts against His prophets (Ps. CIV, 15). Let us revere their character, cover their defects, and be guided by the maxim of the Saviour: "He that heareth you, heareth Me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me" (Luke X, 16).

Monday after Sexagesima Sunday.

Dispositions to hear the word of God with fruit.

I. POINT.

The word of God, holy and divine, should be received with corresponding dispositions. "It is spirit and life" (John VI, 64); it is, then, the spirit of God which should make it enter into our hearts, that it may communicate life. As formerly, God, before raining down the manna, sent "a dew which covered the face of the earth" (Ex. XVI, 13), and prepared it to receive this heavenly food; so, to receive the word of God worthily and with profit, we should present to Him a heart prepared and purified, empty and free from cares and exterior solitudes, interiorly recollected, and detached from all earthly affections; for God does not speak in the noise and the tumult, excited by creatures and the passions. He says: "I will lead her into the wilderness, and there I will speak to her heart" (Osee II, 14). It was in the desert that He rained down the manna, and it is in the secret of our souls that He rules and makes Himself heard. "The kingdom of God is within you", says our Lord (Luke XVII, 21). This divine Guest will speak to him who enters into himself.

O my God, I will then depart, I will flee into solitude, and there I will wait for Him, who is my salvation (Ps. LIV, 8); there He will speak in the depth of my heart, and I will listen to Him to practise what He shall teach me (Ps. LXXXIV, 9).

II. POINT.

The second disposition is to receive the word of God as a manna and a gift from heaven, with sentiments of faith, respect and love. That our hearts may be penetrated with these sentiments, let us earnestly persuade ourselves, that these words have been pronounced by the sacred lips of Jesus Christ Himself, since the words are equally His, whether contained in the Gospel, or uttered by His prophets and apostles. Hear My voice, O My people, says He: listen to the words of My mouth (Ps. LXXVII, 1). "He that hearkeneth to Me, shall not be confounded; and they that work by Me, shall not sin" (Ecclesi. XXIV, 30). "Hearken then to My words, and keep them in the midst of thy heart, for they are life" (Prov. IV, 20—22). With what respectful and faithful attention, with what love should we listen to our divine Master, since His words are the words of His tenderness, words of life and peace (John VI, 64), not only for His saints, but also for them, who shall turn to Him with their whole heart (Psalm LXXXIV, 9). "Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John VI, 69). "I will rejoice in Thy words, O Lord, as one who hath found rich spoils" (Ps. CXVIII, 162); I will love them infinitely more than gold and precious stones. "My soul melted with joy, when my Beloved spoke to me" (Cant. V, 6).

III. POINT.

The third disposition, which is represented by the rays of the sun, which melted the manna (Ex. XVI, 21), is a vigilant zeal to receive the divine word, lest the fruit

should be snatched from us by the fatal heat of the passions, or by our indifference and sloth in gathering this holy seed and using it as God requires. We must take care that no crumb of this heavenly bread be lost, and that no word of the Saviour fall to the ground. My word, said He by the prophet, shall not return in vain, but it shall bear fruit, according to the design for which I have sent it (Is. LV, 11). "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James I, 22). "Blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it" (Luke XI, 28). "If any one love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him" (John XIV, 23). If My words remain in you, all that you ask shall be granted to you. O great and magnificent promises! May Thy holy word, O Jesus, be the light that will enlighten my steps and guide me in the narrow way, "that no iniquity may have dominion over me" (Ps. CXVIII, 133). Thy word, O Lord, shall endure eternally in heaven, and they who love it and obey it, shall reign with Thee forever; therefore I will observe it, and will attach myself to it alone, in view of so great a recompense, and through an ardent love for Him who promises it.

Tuesday after Sexagesima Sunday.

Obstacles to the fruitfulness of the word of God.

I. POINT.

"A sower went out to sow his seed, and some fell by the wayside, and was trodden under foot and devoured by the birds of the air."

(Luke VIII, 5.)

The way represents persons who live according to the spirit and corruption of the world. Soil that is

walked over continually, becomes hard and even entirely sterile: in like manner, souls who are constantly moved by human passions, bear no fruit of good works; the heavenly seed is trodden under foot, and cannot germinate. It is the same with that which is eaten by the birds of the air. The devil, which these birds represent, comes, as Jesus Christ Himself explains, and takes away the holy word which has been sown in the hearts of men. This word would have produced a lively and active faith, and this is what the devil wishes to prevent, lest men believing thus should be saved. But how does he take away the seed of the divine word? For this he makes use of bad example, of the torrent of custom, of flattery, of false friends, of human respect, finally, of the vanity and dissipation of the world, which leave no leisure to consider and meditate upon the high truths of salvation, so that the word of God is heard without attention and produces no fruit. O Jesus, "remove me from the way of iniquity" (Ps. CXVIII, 29), that Thy truth may repose in my heart, and bring forth fruit for eternal life.

II. POINT.

"Other some fell upon a rock, and as soon as it had sprung up, it withered away" (Luke VIII, 6). Here are represented, says our Lord, those who listen to the word with joy, but who, having no roots, believe only for a time, and when temptation comes, they withdraw and no longer retain the salutary sentiments which the word had excited in them. The root which is wanting to these inconstant and trifling men, is charity, according to St. Paul: "Be rooted in charity" (Eph. III, 17). It is the want of this essential virtue, which destroys even persons who show an exterior piety, and who appear to love the word of God. As their religion is

only superficial, while the interior is full of stones, that is, of earthly passions, self-love, and a continual seeking for the comforts and conveniences of life, the least temptation is sufficient to dry up their devotion, and make them perish. They fall into impatience, discouragement and languor, because they have not the root of love, without which no good fruit can be produced. They regard the word as an agreeable object, rather than as a mirror which would show them their spots, as a remedy to heal them, or as a rule to guide them: it is only on the surface of their minds, it does not penetrate their hearts. O Jesus, take from me this heart of stone, inflexible, rebellious, insensible to Thy love; give me a heart docile to Thy voice, a heart that will love Thee and cherish Thy law.

III. POINT.

“Other some fell among thorns, which growing together with the grain, choked it.” These thorns represent those who, having received the word, allow it to be lost and choked by worldly cares and the love of riches and pleasures. Jesus Christ supposes that the heavenly seed has taken root in these persons, that it has begun to grow by good works; but while it was growing, the thorns were growing at the same time; that is, the cares, the anxieties of the world, which attach the soul to earthly goods, prevent the seed from yielding fruit, or, at least, prevent the fruit from coming to maturity; thus the cares and perplexities of the world growing always more and more, entirely choke and suffocate grace. This should make even the most holy tremble, and should render them vigilant and attentive to their own virtues; lest, being overcome by a greater number of vices and evil habits, spoiled and corrupted by self-love, they should lose all their merit, and not receive

any recompense, according to these words of the Lord: If I have not looked favorably upon your fasts, it is because you have not ceased to do evil; and your own will, the only source of the good that you have done, has rendered it displeasing to My eyes (Is. LVIII, 3).

Wednesday after Sexagesima Sunday.

The profit derived from the word is according to one's disposition.

I. POINT.

A part of the seed "fell on good ground, and, having sprung up, it yielded fruit a hundred-fold." (Luke VIII, 8.)

As there are different graces and different co-operations with grace on our part, so the good ground, or hearts of good will, yield fruit differently; some produce thirty-fold, others sixty, and others even a hundred-fold. A single grain of seed, a single degree of grace, a single word of God, a single Communion ought to be sufficient for our sanctification, but the seed yields fruit only according to our co-operation and fidelity. Christian hearts which produce thirty-fold, are those which are satisfied with avoiding mortal sin, observing the commandments of God, and doing the good works necessary for salvation. These persons fear God, they respect His word and honor holy things. Happy will they be, if, persevering in the way of justice, they render themselves worthy to receive the reward, and to be saved "so as by fire", according to the expression of St. Paul (1 Cor. III, 13); for they are in great danger of going astray and of losing sight of Jesus Christ. They follow Him, indeed, but at a distance; they serve Him, but imperfectly, and rather as mercenaries and through fear of punishment, than with the tenderness and love which ought to animate children.

II. POINT.

They who bring forth sixty-fold, are those who, moved by divine love, avoid not only mortal sin, which alone can separate them from Him by extinguishing charity, but also those sins which cool and lessen it, and which, not being incompatible with sanctifying grace, yet weaken or diminish, to some extent, grace in those who commit them. It is sufficient for them to know that these venial faults displease the God whom they love, and that to love and to offend are incompatible with each other; that from little things one passes to greater, the mere sight of which should make them shudder and tremble. They practise virtue and good works; but they have reserves with God, they love something else, their love is not proof against affliction; in a word, it is not sufficiently strong, persevering and faithful; therefore they do not yield a hundred-fold. They receive graces; but many graces which had been prepared for them, are withdrawn; for God, who is liberal with generous hearts, will be reserved also with those who are reserved with Him (Eccli. XXXV, 13).

III. POINT.

The seed which yields a hundred-fold, according to the explanation of our Lord, is the heart of him, who loves Him singularly, above all, and more than all, who gives Him all that he is, and all that he has; who knows no interest but His glory, no desire but to possess Him, no delight but to serve Him, no passion but His love, and whose care, if he still feels human inclinations, is to destroy them, and make them the subject of his sacrifices. O what fruit does such a soul produce for herself and in others! As God is in her heart, as she loves only Him, she wishes to inspire no love but His, she does not wish to attract that of any creature, lest

she should belong less to God; because she knows that all division is odious to her Beloved, and that she would lose His tenderness in proportion as she would share her own between others and Him. But, O how abundantly is her fidelity recompensed! What peace, what tranquillity, what holy joy abounds in her, even amid persecutions and hardships, in sufferings, and at the hour of death! For these happy dispositions are the hundred-fold (Mat. XIX, 29) which Jesus Christ has promised, and which He gives to those who serve Him, and abandon themselves entirely to Him.

Thursday after Sexagesima Sunday.

Three kinds of seeds.

I. POINT.

There are three kinds of seed which Jesus Christ our Lord plants in our souls. The first is the holy word, of which it is said: "He hath begotten us by the word of truth" (James I, 18). It is by this word that Jesus has established His religion throughout the universe. Go, said He to His apostles, "teach all nations" (Mat. XXVIII, 19); convert them, make them faithful and heirs of My kingdom, wash them from all their iniquities by the power of My Name. It was by virtue of this sacred Name, that St. Peter by his first sermon converted three thousand persons to the Lord (Acts II, 41), and these words, written later by St. Paul, were then verified: "The word of God is living and effectual, and more piercing than a two-edged sword, reaching unto the division of soul and spirit" (Heb. IV, 12), that is, of the carnal man and himself and his inordinate passions and desires. O Jesus, make me feel the sweet power of Thy word, of that word which enlightens and gives wisdom to the little ones (Ps. XVIII, 8),

which purifies, changes and converts hearts, of that word which will condemn those whom it will not convert, according to Thy threat: "He that despiseth Me, and receiveth not My words, hath One that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John XII, 43).

II. POINT.

The second seed which God plants in our souls, is grace. It should be received with humility, preserved with care and vigilance; it should germinate and produce in us abundant fruits by a fervent co-operation on our part. We can do nothing without this grace: and if, through a pure effect of the mercy and goodness of God, which in truth are never wanting to us, it does not prevent us, we can neither merit it, nor even ask for it. This grace is all powerful to excite us to good; it is active, and works in us continually, not alone, however, for it does so conjointly with us; for, if it anticipates us, and is given to us gratuitously, it does not act without us, it must be followed and seconded by our free and voluntary co-operation. All powerful and beneficent as it is, it remains inactive, if we do not co-operate by our consent, efforts and fidelity. O Jesus, give us a powerful grace which will make us obey, a victorious and efficacious grace, which will overcome our resistance, and make us correspond faithfully to its inspirations, according to all the designs and desires of Thy love.

III. POINT.

The third seed is the most sacred Body of Jesus in the holy Sacrament of the Altar: a precious seed, which, at first confined in the virginal womb of Mary, was afterwards sown in the land of Judea, died upon the Cross, germinated in the resurrection, blooms upon

our altars, and should bring forth abundant fruits in our souls by holy Communion. But with what sentiments of awe, of respect, of contrition and love should we receive it, since, although always in itself a source of life and holiness, it produces contrary effects of life and death, for it is the life of the good, and the death of the wicked, as the Church teaches. O Jesus, who dost render Thyself present in the Blessed Eucharist, to be a perpetual fountain of grace, and to accomplish our sanctification with power, come, act in us, produce in us the happy fruits of a faithful imitation of Thy holy virtues, that they may render us worthy to possess Thee here below, and to enjoy Thy glorious presence in heaven.

Friday after Sexagesima Sunday.

The excellence of the Christian vocation.

I. POINT.

“To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, but to others in parables.”
(*Luke VIII, 10.*)

God is not indebted to any one, and He gives to all gratuitously, distributing His gifts differently, according to the secret counsels of His wisdom and goodness. St. Paul says: “By the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Cor. XV, 10). With him let us acknowledge these favors of choice and distinction, with which God has prevented us, enlightening us with His lights, and drawing us from the mass of corruption, whilst even whole nations remain plunged in ignorance and sin, live in the darkness of idolatry, and groan in the bondage of the devil and of error. What have we done for God, to be delivered from this cruel yoke, even before we knew Him? What have we done to be counted

among the children of God, almost as soon as we were numbered among the children of men? Finally, what a grace to be born in the bosom of the Church and of the truth. O Jesus, who hast broken my bonds (Ps. CXV, 16) at the very time that they were only beginning to be formed, Thou, who didst open my eyes to Thy divine light before they had seen the light of day, I will sacrifice to Thee a victim of praise, and "I will sing Thy mercies forever" (Ps. LXXXVIII, 1).

II. POINT.

"To you it is given to know the mystery of the Wisdom of God" (Luke VIII, 10). Who can sufficiently penetrate the greatness and excellence of the gift of God, by which we have been not only regenerated in the salutary waters of baptism, but also strengthened, purified, sustained, nourished in the other sacraments? What other nation has been more favored than the Christian people? Is there any which has its gods so near? Ours is always present to our prayers (Deut. IV, 7); He is never wearied by them, He never disdains to entertain Himself with us; He treats us and regards us no longer as His servants, but as His children and friends (John XV, 15), and therefore He confides to us all the secrets of His kingdom. "O blessed is the nation, whose God is the Lord! Blessed the people whom He hath chosen for His inheritance!" (Ps. XXXII, 12). O God, who hast chosen and separated us, that we might belong to Thee in a peculiar manner (Lev. XX, 26), O Thou, who hast called us to be Thy people (Deut. VII, 6), but a people holy, and destined to good works; enable us to live in a manner worthy of Thee, and of the holy and divine vocation to which it has pleased Thee to call us (2 Tim. I, 9).

III. POINT.

“To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God.” How many pagans and sinners would be perfect Christians and great saints, if they had received in the same abundance the graces which we have abused, and which, perhaps, we abuse still! “Woe to thee, Corozain! Woe to thee, Bethsaida!” said our Lord, “because if the mighty works, which have been wrought in you, had been wrought in Tyre and Sidon, they would have done penance long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes” (Luke X, 13). Jesus Christ assures us that the queen of Sheba and the Ninevites will rise as witnesses against His people in the judgment, because they listened to His prophet and did penance, with less assistance and fewer graces (Mat. XII, 41). Let us then tremble on account of the graces we receive every moment; let us fear lest so many favors received with indifference, with coldness, with ingratitude, should compel God to change His love into hatred, His goodness into wrath, and the gifts of His liberality into just chastisements, according to these words: I have sought you, I have invited you, “I called you, and you did not answer” (Is. LXV, 12); you have neglected to listen to My voice: I will despise you in My turn, I will laugh at your sufferings (Prov. I, 26), and I will turn away, that I may not hear your prayers. O Lord, who hast prevented us and loaded us with Thy benefits, add to them that of rendering us sensible and grateful, that we may merit, by Thy mercy, to have Thy gifts crowned in us in time and in eternity.

Saturday after Sexagesima Sunday.**Christ's baptism.****I. POINT.**

Jesus came to St. John on the shores of the Jordan to be baptized by him.

(Mat. III, 13.)

Jesus, who wished to be our model in all things, before leaving His hidden life, to preach and manifest Himself to the world, begins, not to exalt Himself, not to show forth His glory, but to humble Himself. He comes to the feet of His precursor to receive his baptism, and to "fulfil", as He said, "all justice" (Mat. III, 15). By this expression is signified humility; because, according to the holy Doctors, he who instructs others, must be equally humble and holy, and the more humble he is, the more holy also will he be. O profound humility of Jesus, which condemns our pride! Jesus, the Saint of saints, ranks Himself among sinners; and we sinners wish to pass for saints and just men! The eternal Father exalts His Son in proportion as He abases Himself. The heavens open above Him, that He may receive the sanction of His mission, not from earth, but from heaven; not from men, but from God Himself. They open above Him to teach us, that it was by Him that heaven was to be opened to us. Let us raise our hearts towards the abode of the blessed, and let us say to God with the prophet: "Rend the heavens and come down" to us (Is. LXIV, 1), O Lord, to raise us to Thee.

II. POINT.

"The Holy Ghost descended upon Him in the form of a dove" (Luke III, 22). The Holy Ghost anointed and sanctified Jesus from the first moment of His conception; He appears above Him, to represent, not a new infusion of grace, but the first plenitude, peculiar

to Him alone. This Divine Spirit descended upon the apostles in the form of cloven tongues (Acts II, 3), and upon Jesus in the form of a dove, to represent, according to St. Gregory, that the apostles received Him by measure, and with division of His gifts, but that He dwelt in Jesus with the perfect fulness of His graces. Therefore St. John, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, exclaimed, seeing Jesus come to him (John I, 29): "Lord, I must be baptized by Thee, and comest Thou to me?" (Mat. III, 14). So, also, Elizabeth, the mother of the holy precursor, bearing him in her womb, had said to the Blessed Virgin: "Whence is this (happiness) to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke I, 43). When the soul sees her Jesus, her Sanctifier, coming to her by the interior motions of His grace, or by holy Communion, ought she not in astonishment to exclaim with St. John the Baptist: What, Lord, dost Thou come to me? And with St. Elizabeth: Whence is this happiness to me? Or with the saints: Come, Lord Jesus, and pour upon me the abundance of Thy holy Spirit.

III. POINT.

"A voice from heaven was heard, saying, this is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mat. III, 17). Jesus is the Beloved of the Father, and no one can come to Him, or be regarded by Him, but through His Son: "No one", says He, "cometh to the Father, but by Me" (John XIV, 6). No salvation, no eternal life, no happiness, is to be hoped for, but by Jesus. If He receives baptism to-day from His precursor, it is to merit for us, that we may be baptized in the virtue of the Holy Ghost, and receive in His Name the remission of our sins; if He descends into the waters, it is to communicate to them, by the touch of His sacred

and sanctifying flesh, the virtue to purify and sanctify our souls in the sacrament of regeneration. O Jesus, our only Saviour, save and deliver us! Singular Object of the complacency of God, Thy Father, be Thou the only object of my love! May I repose in Thee as in my centre, and may I learn to please Thee alone, may I be pleased with Thee alone, for certainly he asks too much to whom Thou art not sufficient (St. Augustine).

Quinquagesima Sunday.

Christ predicts His sufferings.

I. POINT.

“Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that have been written of the Son of man shall be accomplished. He shall be delivered to the gentiles, He shall be scourged, mocked..... and they will put Him to death.”

(Luke XVIII, 31.)

The Church proposes to us, before the holy season of Lent, an abridgment of Christ's Passion, in which are related the four principal circumstances which may best excite our piety, and enable us to reap its fruits. “He shall be delivered”: by whom? By one of His own disciples, without being defended by the others, who will all take flight and abandon Him. “He shall be delivered”: to whom? To His most cruel enemies, and to the powers of darkness. O Jesus, betrayed, abandoned, delivered to the rage of hell and its minions, abandon me not, lest I myself should basely betray Thee, and abandon Thee! “He shall be mocked”; this word comprises all the insults, all the outrages, all the blasphemies, all the shameful treatment which Jesus endured. May the saints “render to Thee benediction, honor and glory”, O Lord, “for ever and ever” (Apoc. V, 13), and may all creatures, together with me,

offer Thee very humble homage upon earth. "He shall be scourged": a torture equally cruel and ignominious. Finally, "they shall put Him to death" on the infamous gibbet of the Cross. O confusion of Jesus, which should be honored by our praises! O humiliations worthy to be exalted by God Himself! O death, O sorrows, O sufferings, which have merited the salvation of the world.

II. POINT.

Jesus, in the whole course of His most holy life, always had His Cross before His eyes. According to St. Paul, His first thoughts, His first words in coming into the world (Heb. X, 5), were of His sacrifice and death. He regarded Himself, from the first moment of His conception, as a victim destined for the expiation of our sins. His Passion, according to His own words, was the object of His desires: "I must be baptized with a baptism, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished" (Luke XII, 50). Jesus wishes that, after His example, we should have in this vale of tears the remembrance of His sufferings and death always engraved in our minds and hearts. Therefore He has left us a perpetual memorial of them in His august Sacrament. O Passion of Jesus, be the guide and inseparable companion of my life! Cross, nails, scourges, thorns, be always present to my mind, and may the remembrance of you constantly afflict and pierce my heart, that with St. Paul I may not judge myself to know or possess anything here below, but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified (1 Cor. II, 2).

III. POINT.

On the terrible day of the last judgment the sign of the Son of man, which is the Cross, shall appear in the heavens (Mat. XXIV, 30), as He Himself tells us,

and it is believed that it will remain there always in sight of the blessed for their consolation. The wicked will see it also, but for their confusion, and in spite of themselves they will appear before Him, whom they have pierced (John XIX, 37) with nails and fastened to the Cross. In the state of glory the body of Jesus, freed from all sufferings, will appear marked with His five wounds. The Lamb, says St. John, will be seen "as slain" (Apoc. V, 6), in order to renew and preserve throughout eternity the remembrance of His passion and death. All the angels and saints will bless Him forever, confessing that they owe to His divine merits all the glory of their virtue and beatitude. In imitation of them, may I never "glory, except in the Cross of Jesus Christ" (Gal. VI, 14), that at my last day it may be the source of my consolation, of my happiness, of my eternal thanksgiving.

Monday after Quinquagesima Sunday.

The mystery of the Cross.

I. POINT.

"They understood none of these things, and this word was hidden from them."

(Luke XVIII, 34.)

The apostles listened to the words of their divine Master concerning His sufferings, but they did not understand their meaning. Hence St. Peter said to Jesus: "Lord, be it far from Thee, this shall not be unto Thee" (Mat. XVI, 22). Jesus reprovéd him, and called him Satan, because he "understood not the things of God" (Mat. XVI, 23). To whom among Christians may not this reproach be addressed? How many are there who hear the word of the Cross, and how few understand its necessity! They adore it willingly, they

honor the Passion of Jesus Christ exteriorly; but they do not wish to take part in it, nor do they wish to enter into fellowship with Him in His humiliations and sufferings. They do not understand the depth of these words: "If any one will come after Me, let him deny himself, let him take up his cross every day, and follow Me" (Luke IX, 23). Like the idols of which the psalmist speaks, when there is question of the necessity of suffering, the greater part of men have eyes and see not, they have ears and hear not (Mark VIII, 18). "O Lord, enlighten mine eyes, that I may never sleep in death" (Ps. XII, 4).

II. POINT.

If the apostles did not understand what our Lord said to them of His death and sufferings, it was only for a time, and only as long as they were in a state of spiritual infancy; but we who received the faith almost as soon as our being, we begin to use our reason by turning away from the truth; we grow in this aversion, we live in it, we grow old in it. It is to be feared that we shall never give it up, and that we shall be among the number of those of whom St. Paul says weeping, that they "are enemies of the Cross of Christ", that they make a god of their pleasures, and "their end is destruction" (Phil. III, 18, 19). If we wish to avoid this misfortune, let us listen to Jesus Christ still more with the ears of the heart, than with those of the body; let us adopt the same sentiments, let us be inseparably united to Him, lest the law of sin, always opposed to that of the spirit, should prevail in us and prevent us from loving the Cross. This law of the spirit, says the author of "The Imitation", seems hard; but how much harder would it be to hear and be compelled to undergo this terrible sentence: "Depart from Me, ye cursed,

into everlasting fire" (Mat. XXV, 41). An irrevocable sentence for those who treat the Cross as folly, that Cross which is for the elect salvation, the strength and power of God (1 Cor. I, 18).

III. POINT.

Let the just, then, let the friends of God understand these words, by which the Gospel announces to us the Cross, and says: Behold, the Son of God, who for us became the Son of man, is going to Jerusalem, there to offer Himself as a sacrifice. We are approaching the time when we shall celebrate the memory of His sufferings, a time, destined to arouse our slumbering faith, and to make us meditate upon what Jesus Christ endured for us sinners. To what outrages, to what sufferings did He not expose Himself, to teach us, and convince us of this fundamental truth of our religion, that we must die in order to live, and that no salvation is to be hoped for, if we do not renounce sin, the world and ourselves. Let it be sufficient for us that our Lord says, not only that He will be insulted, crucified, put to death, but also that He "will rise again" (Luke XVIII, 33), to make us see that the way of ignominy, afflictions and sufferings is the road to His kingdom, and in proportion as we participate in His labors, we shall have a share in His consolations, His triumph and His glory (2 Cor. I, 7).

Tuesday after Quinquagesima Sunday.

The blind man's prayer.

I. POINT.

"A certain blind man sat by the way-side begging, and when he heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, he cried out: Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me."

(Luke XVIII, 35.)

We are here below on earth in the road which leads

to our true country. If we are sitting, if we are reposing, as too often happens, in the way in which we should walk without intermission to reach heaven, we are struck with a fatal blindness, and it is greatly to be feared that we shall perish in the way, without ever reaching the happy end to which we are called. Let us acknowledge our darkness and the miseries in which it involves us, let us implore our cure, let us confess that we neither have nor can do anything, because we are poor and helpless. We do not know what is proper for us; we take falsehood for truth, because we are weak and ignorant; we do not merit the graces of God, because we are sinners; it remains for us, then, only to beg and implore the mercy of Jesus. There is nothing so efficacious to attract His clemency and goodness, as the sincere avowal of our blindness and misery. Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us!

II. POINT.

Mercy belongs to Jesus, not only as the Son of the living God, but also as the Son of David, because He drew from David bowels of mercy, that is, a nature capable of suffering and susceptible of compassion; and David, a sinner, but afterwards a penitent, was himself the subject of His great mercy; for the goodness of Jesus does not disdain the unworthiness of the sinner, and the abyss of our miseries calls and attracts the abyss of His mercies. "Deep calleth on deep" (Ps. XLI, 8). St. Francis de Sales says, that between extreme indigence and sovereign abundance there is a marvellous correspondence: the one asks and desires to receive; the other is urged by its own fulness to pour itself forth and to give. The Supreme Good loves to communicate Himself; the void of all good seeks to be filled; but as the goodness of Jesus is infinitely greater

than our wickedness, He takes still more pleasure in doing us good, than we in receiving it. O Jesus, who didst descend from the throne of Thy glory, to seek us in our lowliness, make us feel the effects of Thy merciful goodness.

III. POINT.

“He cried out much more: Son of David, have mercy on me.” — When the world persecutes us, when it wishes to turn us aside from Jesus Christ; when the devil strives to diminish the fervor of our prayers, when he excites in us temptations to disgust and discouragement, to prevent us from having recourse to Jesus; when the flesh rebels, and seeks to prevail over the spirit; in all these occasions, let us change our prayer into redoubled cries; let us cry to Jesus so much the more, in proportion as we are tempted more strongly, that is, let us re-animate our ardor and perseverance in prayer; let us cry, not only with the lips, but still more with the heart. Let us pray by our actions, let us raise to heaven pure hearts and hands full of good works, that our life may not be dumb when our tongue speaks to God; then He will say to us, as to the blind man mentioned in the Gospel: “What wilt thou, that I do to thee?” (Luke XVIII, 41). For what can we not obtain from Him by a prayer, that is fervent, persevering, humble and accompanied by confidence? It “pierceth the clouds” (Eccli. XXXV, 21); it touches the heart of God, it wins for us all the graces that we need.

Ash Wednesday.

Humility of heart.

I. POINT.

“When thou fastest, anoint thy head and wash thy face”
(Mat. VI, 17.)

Jesus teaches us by these words, that it is not suf-

ficient to do good, but that we must do it well; that God regards not so much our hands as our hearts. "The Lord had respect to Abel and to his offerings," says Holy Scripture (Gen. IV, 4). He does not count our actions, He weighs them; He pays less attention to them than to our affections: so that it is not enough to fast, to pray, to give alms, if all these things are not done with a pure intention to please God alone, and not the world; through piety, and not through vanity; therefore, Jesus adds: "Wash your face" (Mat. VI, 17). The interior face of man is an upright heart and a good conscience, and this makes the difference before God between the same works done by the good and by the wicked. To wash our face is to purify our heart from the stains of sin, from the spots, the imperfections, the engagements and contagion of self-love, to lift it towards God alone, seeking Him above all, and in all. O Jesus, purify my intentions from all that is contrary to the purity of Thy love! May I enter into that spirit which guided all Thy actions upon earth; may I have some share in it, and may I be clothed with Thy holy dispositions!

II. POINT.

The holy Church, guided by the spirit of her Spouse, to-day sprinkles ashes on our heads, to humble our souls before God, and to make us say with the just Abraham, in confessing what we are: "I will speak to my Lord, whereas I am but dust and ashes" (Gen. XVIII, 27). We have been drawn from these ashes and this dust, and we must return to them: this is the fate of our mortal body; but as regards our soul, we are below the dust on which we tread, since we are reduced to nothing by sin. Let us, then, begin this holy season by a profound humiliation; let us flee from

the pomp, the vanity, the glory of the world, the fatal leaven which corrupts the whole mass (Gal. V, 9) of our good works; let us walk with a contrite heart, bruised with sorrow, in order to make satisfaction for our past faults; let us repair by humility the injury done to God by our pride, since the humble sinner displeases Him less than the proud just man. How many good works are destroyed and precipitated into hell by pride! On the contrary, how many sins are effaced, and how many penitents are crowned in heaven by humility!

III. POINT.

“Lay not up treasures to yourselves upon earth, . . . but in heaven” (Mat. VI, 19). The treasures of heaven are very different from those of earth; the latter are perishable, and the former endure forever; the latter are exposed to thieves, to rust, to a thousand other accidents; the others can never be lost or injured; no one can snatch them from us; for, says St. Paul, “who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” (Rom. VIII, 35). The good things of this world do not satisfy the heart, or make it happy, because they are outside of it; but the treasures of heaven enrich, fill, satisfy and render truly happy him who possesses them, because they are within him. Finally, the treasures of this world will leave us, if we do not first leave them; they cannot follow us after death. Fear not, said David, though a man should become rich; for his glory will not go down with him into hell; the riches of grace, on the contrary, will go with us into heaven. O Jesus, our true treasure, source of grace and all good, may I despise and abandon all things, to enjoy Thee and possess Thee in eternity.

Thursday after Quinquagesima Sunday.

“I will come and heal him.”

I. POINT.

Jesus said to the centurion, who besought Him to cure his sick servant: “I will come and heal him.” (Mat. VIII, 7.)

Sin made man sick and languid; to cure him, the Divine Word in the eternal Council offered Himself, saying: “I will go and heal him.” Immediately after the sin of Adam, God announced the cure, by the promise of the blessed seed which was to be born of the woman and crush the serpent’s head. Far from punishing us, as we deserve, God has shown us the riches of His goodness by the fulfilment of His promises; for His Son came to heal us, and, by His patience and longanimity, He says every day: “I will come and heal him.” He overlooks our sins, that we may do penance (Wis. XI, 24). He did not thus treat the rebellious angels; at the moment of their revolt He drove them from His presence, and precipitated them into hell (2 Peter II, 4). Adam himself received a prompt punishment; God did not delay to chastise him; He banished him from paradise (Gen. III, 23) immediately after his disobedience, although He had resolved to save him. But now He waits for man, He dissembles, He bears with him for a long time. To correspond to Thy goodness, O Lord, I will say: “I will arise, I will go” and return “to my Father” (Luke XV, 18). Receive me, O good Jesus, O best of fathers, into the arms of Thy mercy.

II. POINT.

“I will come and heal him.” A promise infinitely advantageous, which should awaken our faith, animate our hope, and inflame our charity! God awaits us, and

calls us with the intention of coming Himself to heal us; but of what use will be this long patience, and these designs of clemency and goodness, if we render ourselves unworthy to receive their effects? In these days He appeals to us by the ministry of His prophets and His Church: "Be converted to Me with your whole heart" (Joel II, 12); for all My love for you will be in vain, and will serve only for your condemnation, if you do not turn yours towards Me; be converted to Me with your whole heart. Our perfidious, ungrateful heart had unworthily attached itself to creatures, and to itself by sin; it must change, it must turn away, it must separate itself from criminal and profane objects, in order to return to God; it must bewail its errors, weep over its estrangement from its Sovereign Master, and restore what it has so unjustly usurped from Him, by consecrating to Him its love and affections, irrevocably and forever.

III. POINT.

"I will come and heal him." Let us answer with the humble centurion: We are not worthy, Lord, that Thou shouldst come to us, that Thou shouldst enter into our house; but say only one word, our souls will be healed, and the world will be saved; it is not by our merits, it is only by Thy mercy (Titus III, 5), by the excess of Thy immense charity, that Thou hast come from on high to visit us (Luke I, 68). We acknowledge, Lord, the inability of all created nature to save us: man was not capable of it, the angels could not; but Thou, Lord, art the true "Lamb slain from the beginning of the world" (Apoc. XIII, 8), who wast found worthy to open the book of eternal life and to break its seals (Apoc. V, 5). Thou alone couldst worthily satisfy the divine justice; Thou alone, infinitely just and holy,

couldst sanctify our souls and efface all our evil deeds; we acknowledge ourselves unworthy of the grace of Thy coming, of a participation in Thy merits and labors, unworthy even to speak to Thee; how much more to approach the sacred altar, upon which Thou dost sacrifice Thyself for us every day, and dost every day descend to us to heal all our infirmities. "Thou art worthy to receive glory and honor and power" (Apoc. IV, 11), and we are worthy of all opprobrium, contempt and confusion. May the humble avowal of our miseries move Thy goodness, and be a sacrifice agreeable in Thy sight.

Friday after Quinquagesima Sunday.

Pardon of enemies.

I. POINT.

"You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not kill. And whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say unto you" (Mat. V, 21).

It is God who speaks; it is the uncreated Word of the Father, substantial and subsisting in God, by whom all things were made; it is the eternal Wisdom, whose voice makes itself heard in the public streets (Prov. I, 20); it is the "Teacher of Justice" (Joel II, 23), formerly promised by God; it is the well-beloved Son of the Father (Mat. III, 17), "in whom He is well pleased", who commands us. Let us, then, receive His divine words with respect, as a precious manna from heaven; let us receive His holy doctrine with devotion; let us humbly obey His salutary teachings. The eternal Father says to us: "Hear ye Him." Let Moses and the prophets no longer speak to us, but this great Jesus "mighty in work and word" (Luke XXIV, 19).

“Speak, Lord” Jesus, “for Thy servant heareth” (1 Kings III, 10). Let all creatures be silent in Thy presence, and mayst Thou alone speak to my heart. O happy is he who listens, not to the voice of the world without, but to the First Truth which speaks within, and which teaches all truth!

II. POINT.

Jesus is the “living and effectual word, more piercing than any two-edged sword” (Heb. IV, 12). A word which gives light to make itself understood, which inflames hearts to make itself loved (Ps. LXXII, 21), which communicates grace to make its commandments observed. Jesus persuades in teaching, and He gives strength to obey in commanding; He imprints powerfully in our hearts what He says gently to our ears; He speaks without, and He pours His unction within; therefore He declares: “My yoke is sweet and My burden is light” (Mat. XI, 30). Although He gives commands more difficult than those of the Old Law, although He demands of us a higher virtue and a greater perfection, as, for instance, “to love our enemies and to do good to those who hate us” (Mat. V, 44), the assistance of His grace, the strength of His spirit, and the charity which He pours into our hearts (Rom. V, 5), all this sweetens the yoke and renders the burden not only light, but even agreeable; for “the commandments of God are not heavy” (1 John V, 3), says the beloved disciple. O Jesus, give me the strength to accomplish what Thou dost command, and command what Thou pleasest.

III. POINT.

“I say unto you, love your enemies” (Mat. V, 44). Who is it that speaks? To whom does He speak, and what does He say? It is Jesus, who speaks and com-

mands; it is our Lord, our Judge and our King (Is. XXXIII, 22); He orders His creatures, His servants and His subjects. And what does He command, but to love Him, to love our neighbor, even our enemies? Jesus teaches us this precept still more by His example than by His words; for, when we were His enemies, He died to restore us to life (Rom. V, 9); He merited grace for those who were unworthy of it; He suffered the penalty and the chastisement which were due to us for having offended Him. He prayed for those who crucified Him, and for each one of us, whose sins redoubled His sufferings on the Cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke XXIII, 34). O charity of Jesus, always ardent even in the midst of the thorns of our sins and of our ingratitude. Lord, kindle some of its flames in our lifeless hearts. May we love Thee, O my God, who didst "first love us" (1 John IV, 19). May we love our enemies for love of Thee, who hast presented us with Thy love and Thy benefits, and who didst do and suffer for us such great things, when we merited only Thy anger and the scourges of Thy justice.

Saturday after Quinquagesima Sunday.

Confidence in God amid trials.

I. POINT.

"Be of good heart, it is I, fear not."

(Mat. XIV, 27.)

The Church, at the beginning of this holy season, proposes to us a figure of the state of this present life, of the agitation, of the continual labors to which we are subject so long as it lasts; she intends to teach us that God wills and orders these revolutions and tempests, to draw us to Himself by detaching us from everything earthly. He mingles salutary bitterness

with the false sweetness of the world; He sends us contradictions and afflictions; He permits men to persecute us unjustly, and all this to detach us from the affection of creatures, and to induce us to return to Him. But whilst we are experiencing only perfidy and inconstancy on the part of men, He opens to us the bosom of His mercy, saying to us: Have confidence; "it is I, fear not." You shall have thorns and contradictions, but have confidence in Me, I have overcome the world (John VI, 20). Let us, then, be prepared for contradictions and sufferings, and amid these evils let us not lose hope in Him, who is at hand to deliver us, or who prepares crowns for our patience. "To Thee, O Lord, I have lifted my soul. In Thee, O my God, I put my trust; let me not be ashamed. Neither let my enemies laugh at me, for none of them that wait on Thee shall be confounded" (Ps. XXIV, 1-3).

II. POINT.

"It is I; fear not." O mighty word, which puts to flight all the powers of hell, which confounds the designs and the false wisdom of the world! By these words: "It is I", Jesus renders His enemies weak and powerless, He throws them to the ground, and by this same word, He renders our foes unable to injure us, and to surprise us by their temptations; He makes us conquerors, and turns the evil, which they wish to do us, into our greater good. Lord, whom shall we fear, if we are with Thee, and united to Thee? (Ps. XXVI, 1). Thou art the vine, and we are the branches which must remain in Thee, in order to have life (John XV, 5). I will say boldly with David: "I will fear no evil, O Lord, because Thou art with me" (Ps. XXII, 4); and with blessed Job: "Though He should kill me, I will hope in Him" (Job XIII, 15). Yes, my Lord

Jesus, I will hope in Thee and I will love Thee, for Thou art my strength, my support, my refuge and my deliverer (Ps. XVII, 3).

III. POINT.

“Whithersoever He entered, into towns or into villages or cities, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought Him that they might touch but the hem of His garment: and as many as touched Him, were made whole” (Mark VI, 56). There is nothing in Jesus Christ, which is not efficacious: His look, His word, and His touch, everything in Him contains grace, produces effects of salvation and sanctification. He even renders all that He touches, capable of sanctifying; He makes it holy, and a source of holiness; so that “a virtue went out from Him and healed all” (Luke VI, 19), all kinds of diseases and infirmities. This assertion of the evangelist may and ought to be understood even more of the healing of the soul, than of the body. Therefore Jesus never disdained or rejected the sinners who sought Him, and of them He said: “They that are in health need not a physician, but they that are ill” (Mat. IX, 12). O Jesus, inexhaustible source of health and life, “heal my soul” (Ps. XL, 5) of all its infirmities; raise it to life by the power and virtue of Thy holy love.

First Sunday of Lent.

Christ's solitude in the desert.

I. POINT.

“Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert.”

(Mat. IV, 1.)

Jesus is the only-begotten Son of God, made man, and Himself true God; and as He is God, He is with the Father one same principle from which the Holy Ghost proceeds eternally. But as the Holy Spirit was in time the principle of the Man-God, when His divinity

was united to our nature, it was the Holy Ghost, who formed Him in the most chaste womb of Mary. Jesus remained in His holy humanity, as in His temple; He was in it the ever active principle of its adorable operations, interior and exterior; He directed it in all its steps, in all its motions and in all its actions upon earth; and thus He was led by the Spirit into the desert, not by force and constraint, but by the sweet power of this divine breath. O Jesus, make us docile to the impressions of Thy Divine Spirit, and since, according to the language of Thy apostle, "they who act by the Spirit of God are sons of God" (Rom. VIII, 14), grant that, after Thy example, we may always follow His lights, His inspirations and motions, abandoning ourselves without reserve to His holy and loving guidance.

II. POINT.

"Jesus", after His baptism, "was led by the Spirit into the desert." The solitude of Jesus, separated from the sight and the conversation of men, is very worthy of being honored and often imitated. How many great instructions do we not receive from this conduct of the Holy Ghost towards Him! It teaches us that the grace of baptism and the other sacraments is infinitely precious, since Jesus flees from the world and the society of creatures, the better to preserve it, to make it increase and become fruitful. We learn also from this action of the Son of God, that we ought not to choose a state of life by our own light, nor undertake anything by the advice of flesh and blood, but only by the motion of the Holy Ghost, whom we ought often to invoke and attract to us by humble and fervent prayer. We learn, finally, to esteem the gift of our vocation, and to make ourselves worthy of it by a faithful co-operation; and fearing lest so precious a treasure should be snatched

from us, to seek refuge with Jesus in retreat, if not exterior, at least interior, by recollection and prayer. O Jesus, lead me into the desert with Thee; may Thy "good Spirit lead me into the right land" (Ps. CXLII, 10), that is, in the way of Thy most holy will.

III. POINT.

Let us not lose a single circumstance of the life of Jesus in the desert. "He was there": with whom? "With wild beasts" (Mark I, 13). What company for Him, the joy of the angels, whose beatitude consists in seeing and contemplating Him! What an abasement for Him, to be and to dwell among beasts! O Lord, Thy "delight is to be with the children of men" (Prov. VIII, 31), capable of knowing and loving Thee, and not with irrational creatures. But, alas! if Thou dost find in them less understanding, dost Thou not find in them less ingratitude? Jesus, during these forty days, in the horrors of a vast desert, endured the heat of the sun, the cold of the night, the inclemency of the air, thirst and hunger. He prayed unceasingly, and suffered for our salvation. Happy shall we be, if we profit by His example and imitate it; for He commands us nothing which He has not first performed. He says: "I have given you an example, that you may do as I have done" (John XIII, 15). Ah! Lord, what dost Thou not do for me, and what do I do for Thee? Thou dost pray, Thou dost fast, Thou dost keep silence, Thou dost suffer; and I seek entertainments, pleasures, and I abhor the Cross! What penance ought not we to desire to do at this time, to honor the hardships of Jesus? Ought we not to chastise our bodies with Him? By His fasting, by His silence and His sufferings He sanctifies ours, and by His prayer He imparts efficacy to our prayers. O Jesus, all Thy actions are so many objects

to honor, models to follow, and sources of grace enabling us to merit. May they, according to Thy intentions, secure our salvation!

Monday after the First Sunday of Lent.

The judgment.

I. POINT.

“When the Son of man shall come in His majesty, all nations shall be gathered before Him.”
(Mat. XXV, 31.)

The presence of Jesus will be a joy to all the predestined; the just of the Old Law will rejoice in seeing Him, whom they had so long desired to behold. Job, overwhelmed with afflictions, was consoled by this hope: “In my flesh”, said he, “I shall see my God, and my eyes shall behold Him” (Job XIX, 26). The saints, the witnesses of the life and the companions of the labors of Jesus upon earth, will behold Him the inexorable Judge of the fate of human beings, and they will participate in His glory. Blessed are the eyes which saw Thee here below, O Lord; but still more blessed they, who, placed on Thy right hand among Thy elect, shall see Thee in Thy majesty. There the apostles, the martyrs, so many thousands of confessors, of pure virgins, and saints of all conditions, will reap the sweet fruits of their bitter penances, of the afflictions and torments which they endured, that they might merit to see Jesus; they will see Him, as their Father, as their Redeemer, their life and their treasure, and in beholding Him, they will be filled with “a joy that shall never be taken away from them” (John XVI, 22). Jesus Himself will rejoice in the midst of them, to see the full accomplishment of the prayer, which He made to His Father on the eve of His Passion: “Father,

glorify Me with the glory which I had in Thee, before the world was made" (John XVII, 5).

II. POINT.

"The Son of man shall come in His majesty." The majesty of Jesus will have three divine perfections, which will render it admirable to the good, and appalling to the wicked. His sovereign justice, His supreme power, and His infinite holiness. Jesus, because of His justice, is appointed the Judge of the living and the dead; a Judge from whom nothing can be concealed; a Judge incapable of being moved by prayers, or corrupted by presents, or influenced by compassion: He will be clothed with supreme authority, and His judgment will be without appeal, without reprieve, and without reversal; He will "render to each one according to his works" (Apoc. XXII, 12) with perfect equity. His power will correspond with His justice: He will execute His sentences immediately, and "who can resist Him?" (Esther XIII, 9). But His holiness will be perhaps the most terrible and formidable of all to sinners, who will not be able to bear its weight and splendor. O Lord, just Judge, mighty and powerful, and the Saint of saints, grant us pardon and remission of our misdeeds before the day of Thy vengeance, before the moment when we shall be summoned to Thy presence, to render an account of our whole life; grant that now we may fear Thy justice, submit to Thy power and humble ourselves before the abyss of Thy holiness, that we may not then be overwhelmed thereby for our condemnation.

III. POINT.

"All nations shall be gathered before Him." St. Paul, in conformity with this prediction, says that "we must all appear before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, that

each one may receive the reward for the good or evil which he hath done" (2 Cor. V, 10). All human beings who have ever been, who are, and who will be, of whatever nation, sex or condition, will be present on that day, but with thoughts and sentiments very different from those which they had in this world. There the great and the little, the poor and the rich, will appear in person, without any exception, and, in the midst of this great assembly, I myself shall appear in this same body, re-united to my soul; I shall be presented before the awful throne of Jesus to receive from Him an irrevocable sentence, not in regard to the perishable goods of fortune and temporal life, but in regard to that life and death which will endure forever: there I shall receive the sentence of my eternity. What shall I then wish to have done? What shall I wish to have avoided? I can do it now, I shall wish it then; but, if I do not wish it and do it now, I shall no longer be able to repair my fault, or to effect anything on that last day. Ah, how light and easy should sufferings and hardships now appear, when there is question of bearing them as a sure means of rendering that decisive moment of our eternal destiny happy and favorable.

Tuesday after the First Sunday of Lent.

Jesus Christ, the admiration of heaven and earth.

I. POINT.

"Jesus having come into Jerusalem, the whole city was moved, saying: Who is this?"

(Mat. XXI, 10.)

Jesus coming into the world changed and renewed the world: the oracles of the false gods ceased: the idols were destroyed, the prince of this world was cast out (John XII, 31). The unity of God was acknowledged, His law and His worship were established, the figures

were changed into reality, the Old Law into the New Law; sinners were converted, souls sanctified, and the losses of heaven repaired; in a word, Jesus, entering into the world, diffused a new spirit and a new life, and He could then say, what He will announce at His last coming: "Behold, I make all things new" (Apoc. XXI, 5); "I create new heavens and a new earth" (Is. LXV, 17). The angels, men and devils may exclaim, each one according to his own disposition: "Who is this?" Some through terror and despair, others through respect and love. Thus Jesus, entering into a soul, produces a general change therein; He effaces its sins, and pours into it grace; He roots out vices, and sows virtues; He inspires, according to need, sentiments of fear, compunction, love, humility, courage and fervor. How many motives for us to exclaim: "Who is this?" O Jesus, come, "create in me a clean heart and a right spirit" (Ps. L, 12); change my life and make all things new in my soul.

II. POINT.

"Who is this?" Our "eternal life consists in knowing Thee", O holy Father, "the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (John XVII, 3). The first sentiment, and the principal foundation of piety and the Christian religion, is to have a very high esteem for God, and therefore to think of Him only with reverence, to regard Him only with respect and awe, to speak of Him only with circumspection and adoration. "Who is this?" He is a Sun that dazzles the weakness of our sight, an Object that enraptures heaven, an Abyss of wonders and perfections, that we must adore and love without ever being able to comprehend it, or to sound its depths. If I consider Thee, O Jesus, even in Thy humanity, Thou art true God by the communication of the divine properties, Thou art

“the brightness of the glory of the Father, and the figure of His substance” (Heb. I, 3). I recognize Thy majesty in Thy humility, Thy power in Thy weakness, Thy greatness in Thy littleness. Thou dost possess the fulness of all virtues; Thou art an admirable union of love and mercy; Thou art our Saviour, our Shepherd, our Master and all our good. O Jesus, my Lord, my God, my All!

III. POINT.

“My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves” (Mat. XXI, 13). The first temple or house of prayer which was never profaned, was the womb of Mary, in which Jesus, the great and sovereign Highpriest, began, from the first moment of His mortal life, to offer prayer and supplications for us to God His Father. In this sanctuary God began to be perfectly loved, praised and “adored in spirit and in truth” (John IV, 23). The second temple was to be our souls; they were created to lift themselves to God, to love Him, to pray to Him, and to render Him homage; they have been sanctified and consecrated to His honor by baptism; so that all the irregular or useless motions of our hearts and minds are so many thieves, who, by their thefts, defile and profane this temple. The house of prayer means also monasteries, convents, asylums and holy retreats of souls consecrated to God. In these temples God should be found everywhere; there we should breathe only His love and zeal for His glory. There prayer should be the daily bread and the ordinary occupation; there life should be spent in prayer, or in preparation for it, or in gathering its fruits. The time employed in anything else is stolen from God. Finally, the house of prayer means our churches, specially destined to the divine worship.

Jesus is there in the Blessed Sacrament, always attentive to God His Father, always praying to Him for us. Is it not just that we should think of Him, that we should be reciprocally occupied with Him? O Jesus, drive from our hearts all frivolous cares; expel from them all that is displeasing to Thee, all that is unworthy of Thee, all that turns us away from Thy holy presence; and, since prayer is a gift of Thy Holy Spirit, bestow this gift on us, O Lord, and make us worthy to receive and preserve it.

Wednesday after the First Sunday of Lent.

The abuse of grace.

I. POINT.

*“Behold a greater one than Jonas here
than Solomon here” (Mat. XII, 41, 42).*

The grace of the coming of Jesus Christ, of His life and labors, is the first of all graces, the most precious and estimable; of it we should understand these words of the Saviour: “If thou hadst known the gift of God!” (John IV, 10). But the greater this grace is, the more dangerous is the contempt that is shown to it, and this will be the chief cause of the condemnation of the reprobate. “If I had not come”, said Jesus, “and had not spoken to them, they would not have sin” (John XV, 22). Therefore the Jews, after having transgressed the law of God, and put His prophets to death, were punished only by temporary chastisements; but when the height of their perfidy was directed against Jesus Christ Himself, they sealed their reprobation and were entirely rejected by God. A fatal example, which should make us tremble, lest, participating in their ingratitude, we should be involved in their misfortune and condemnation, for, like them, we have Jesus in the midst of us

in the Blessed Eucharist, and we enjoy the graces of His Incarnation. But what fruit do we derive from them? O Jesus, Thou art the "sign set for the fall and the resurrection of many" (Luke II, 34). Thou dost wish all men to be saved (Tim. II, 4), and it was for this that Thou didst come. Thou dost enlighten with Thy light those who are willing to receive it, but Thy light blinds those who abuse this great benefit; and it was this that made Thee say: "I am come, that they who see not, may see, and that they who see", that is, who despise the known truth, and who harden their will against the motions of grace, "may become blind" (John IX, 39). O my God, turn away from me so terrible a misfortune.

II. POINT.

The abuse of grace is the ordinary cause of the ruin of men. What had the foolish virgins done to be refused admittance to the wedding feast, except that they had not watched and had not co-operated with grace. And the servant who had buried his master's talent in the ground (Mat. XXV, 18), what evil had he done, to be condemned to exterior darkness where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, except that he had neglected to make a good use of grace? Grace is often despised or resisted; it is prepared for us and offered by the goodness of God, but it is either not received, or not preserved when received; it is often destroyed and lost by sin, and it remains without use or fruit. This is what is meant by the talent buried in the ground, or the barren fig-tree, of which the Saviour said: "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" (Luke XIII, 7). The soul, by its infidelities, renders itself unworthy to receive new graces; without these graces it cannot retain those it had first received. O what bitter regret at the hour of death, for having wasted so many treasures and

lost so many favorable moments! Therefore St. Paul exhorts us "not to receive the grace of God in vain" (2 Cor. VI, 1). O Jesus, preserve us from this abuse of Thy graces, grant that we may receive them with humility, that we may preserve them with fear and vigilance, and that we may co-operate with them faithfully.

III. POINT.

They who have received more from God, are more indebted to Him. The Lord distributes His gifts differently; to one He gives one talent, to another two, to another five. The gentiles received the talent of the natural law; the Jews received, moreover, that of the written law, and Christians have received the five talents of the New Law, that is, the fulness of the graces of the Evangelical Law. They, who enjoy the favors of heaven, who receive the sacraments, who hear the holy word, who are in the true Church and in the way of salvation, will have to render a much stricter account than the Jews; the Jews a stricter one than the gentiles; and some, by comparison with others, will be justified or condemned. Among Christians those who are called to a higher perfection, will be more severely punished, if they fail in their vocation (Eph. IV, 1); for every one is bound to labor according to the gift he has received. The devils will rise up against them all at the judgment; these rebellious angels, whom God did not pardon (2 Peter II, 4), will league together against and condemn these ungrateful sinners, to whom God offered His mercies in vain. Infidels who had not the light of faith, and even the Jews, who, "had they known the Lord of glory, would never have crucified Him" (1 Cor. II, 8); the Ninevites who believed at the preaching of Jonas; finally, all who have received fewer lights, gifts and means of salvation, will demand the condemnation

of bad Christians. What gratitude do we not owe to our Lord for the abundant graces which we receive every day! And if we do not draw profit from them for His glory, what a weight of wrath do we not heap upon our heads! O Jesus, grant that, corresponding to my vocation and to Thy designs, I may say with St. Paul, that "Thy grace hath not been void in me" (1 Cor. XV, 10).

Thursday after the First Sunday of Lent.

The Chanaanite woman.

I. POINT.

"Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David."
(Mat. XV, 22.)

To Jesus alone it belongs to show mercy; to Him alone, because, being God, He has power to relieve our miseries, and, being man, He has a tender heart to compassionate them. He is God and man at the same time. As God, He is essential goodness, and, having become man, He was all mercy and love. His greatness, His power and all His divine perfections bend down to our littleness, through love, and employ themselves according to His good pleasure. He shows Himself great, powerful, good, just and holy, by the pardon He grants us, in raising us up from our miseries. David says: "Mercy and truth have met each other, justice and peace have kissed" (Ps. LXXXIV, 11). O goodness of Jesus, which does a gentle violence to His other divine perfections; goodness which is the sure refuge of sinners! Glorify Thyself, O Lord, in pardoning us, and showing us mercy.

II. POINT.

"It is not good to take the bread of the children and to cast it to the dogs" (Mat. XV, 26). The gen-

tiles, by their idolatry and their vices, had degraded themselves below the brutes; therefore, it was not just that Jesus should manifest Himself first to them, and work miracles in their favor. This heavenly bread was for the Jews, who were the children, or at least the servants of the house of God; but Christians are the true children of His family: they are destined to eat the bread of His word and His grace, and, above all, the bread of the Most Holy Eucharist. This heavenly and divine Bread, this sacred Bread, was reserved for us; but if it was not just to give it to the dogs, nor even to the servants, let no one be so rash as to approach it without the holy dispositions which it demands, without innocence preserved or, at least, recovered. The saints, the faithful friends of God, full of love and fervor, are the beloved children of the house, who are admitted to the table of Jesus our King. Let us try to gather up the crumbs of their profound humility, their compunction and their love.

III. POINT.

The prayer of the Chanaanite woman is accompanied by faith. This woman acknowledges that Jesus is God by her confidence in His power; she confesses that He is man, by calling Him "the Son of David". She is humble; without relying on her own merits, she has recourse only to the mercy of Jesus, and she esteems herself unworthy of it, and ranks herself with dumb animals. She said: "Lord, the whelps eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table" (Mat. XV, 27). She is not discouraged by His rebuffs, she perseveres, and is piously importunate; she cries to Him, she implores Him; she forces His clemency, and it seems that Jesus is conquered. As formerly Jacob, wrestling with the angel, said to him: "I will not leave thee, till thou hast blessed me" (Gen. XXXII, 26), and he merited

to have his name changed into that of Israel, because, said the angel, "thou hast been strong against God" (Gen. XXXII, 28), — in like manner, this woman is strong against God, and by the efforts of her prayer and redoubled entreaties, she at length obliges Him to grant her a morsel of bread: "Be it done to thee as thou wilt" (Mat. XV, 28). O powerful word, worthy of the goodness of Jesus, who gives more than is asked, to him who asks aright! "All that you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive." If Thou, O Lord, dost say to me, be it done to thee as thou wilt, I protest that I desire only Thee, and the accomplishment of Thy will in me and by me. "May my prayer ascend as incense in Thy sight" (Ps. CXL, 2); excited and kindled by the fire of Thy holy love, may it exhale in Thy presence the odor of sweetness which is pleasing to Thee.

Friday after the First Sunday of Lent.

Christ, the sovereign physician.

I. POINT.

There was a man who had been infirm for thirty-eight years. (John V, 5.)

Human nature fell by sin into a universal weakness and incapacity with regard to God, His grace and salvation. The understanding became obscured, the will depraved, the senses perverted, so that man could not of himself think, will or do anything worthy of God and eternal life. To this first disorder which renders us weak for good and inclined to evil, actual sins add a malice and ingratitude which render us absolutely unworthy of the assistance of God. The ancients awaited with holy impatience the coming of the Angel of the Great Council (Is. IX, 6), and their cure through Him; for the patriarchs, the prophets and all nature

could effect nothing; they hoped and sighed for the Messiah, called "the end of the Law" (Rom. X, 4) and "the desire of the everlasting hills" (Gen. XLIX, 26). He was to redeem the world by His Passion, prefigured by the pool of Bethsaida (John V, 4), which signifies the house of effusion, because upon the Cross was made the great effusion, or shedding of the precious Blood of the spotless Lamb, infinitely efficacious to cure the mortal disease of sin, and to purify and sanctify as many souls as the power of God can create. If one drop of this Blood could penetrate into hell, it would extinguish all its flames, and deliver all the souls buried in its depths. O immense ocean, O inexhaustible abyss of the Passion of Jesus! O infinite dignity of this precious Blood, by which we are enabled to hope for all things.

II. POINT.

Jesus having looked at him, said: "Wilt thou be made whole?" (John V, 6). Jesus by His looks, as the sun by its rays, dissipates our darkness and makes us see the way which leads to Him; He heals the first wound of sin, which is blindness of the mind. The first effect of His coming was to enlighten the world. St. John calls Him the true light, and He Himself says: "I am the light of the world" (John VIII, 12). Look upon us, O Lord, and by Thy looks inspire us with the light of life. "Wilt thou be made whole?" Jesus, after having enlightened us, labors to heal our hearts, warming them with His love and a sincere desire of salvation; but He will not have a paralyzed and vacillating will: He demands a strong and constant resolution. St. Bernard says: You often wish, but in vain; you try, but you do not advance; you begin, but you do not accomplish anything, because in willing you do not will. Jesus, even when working miracles, seems to

demand our co-operation. When changing the water into wine, He commanded the vessels to be filled with water; when He healed the sick, He required their faith, their confidence and their desire. "Wilt thou be made whole?" Thus He says to us: Will you be saved? Our destruction, then, comes from ourselves, and our salvation from God alone (Osee XIII, 9), for He is always present to him who does what he can and ought. O incomparable goodness of Jesus! He places at our disposal the treasures of His merits, His glory and Himself, since in the spiritual life a sincere will and the power are almost the same thing: both come from God and also from us, because God draws us by the chains of our will, for He never uses compulsion. He says: How often have I willed, and you have resisted! (Mat. XXIII, 37). O Jesus, who dost will that I should be saved, and be holy and perfect, for Thou didst die from the ardent thirst of this vehement desire, grant that I may desire with Thee, and that I may unite my heart, my designs and my will to Thine.

III. POINT.

"Sir, I have no man to put me into the pond, when the water is troubled" (John V, 7). The mystery of our redemption, being accomplished by the Passion of Jesus, represented in the healing pool, we need a man to assist us; that is, we need the assistance of Jesus Himself to apply to us His divine merits: this He does in the sacraments, which He uses to confer His grace upon us through His ministers. We experience this in the tribunal of penance: the confessors are for the penitent men sent by God to plunge him into the pool of the precious Blood of Jesus Christ, to reconcile the sinner with God, and to cure the soul of its spiritual paralysis. We ought to respect and honor priests, as

being clothed with the authority of Jesus Christ, who has subjected us to their judgment, and who speaks to us by their mouth. He wishes us to obey them, He has made them His vicars on earth, and He ratifies in heaven the sentences which they pronounce here below. What Jesus said to the paralytic: "Arise, take up Thy bed, and walk" (John V, 8), is a marvellous picture of what takes place in the sacrament of penance, in which we are cured by a holy and efficacious word, and in a moment we recover, besides health, vigor and strength to walk with great strides in the way of God; for "His works are perfect" (Deut. XXXII, 4). O Jesus, make me worthy to receive all the efficacy of Thy grace, and to acknowledge Thy goodness in the facility of the means which Thou hast ordained for my salvation.

Saturday after the First Sunday of Lent.

Correspondence to one's avocation.

I. POINT.

*"Jesus taketh unto Him Peter and James,
and John."* (Mat. XVII, 1.)

Jesus from all eternity has looked on us, loved and chosen us; and what He said to His apostles is addressed to each one of us: "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you" (John XV, 16). St. John says: "Let us love God, since He first loved us" (1 John IV, 19). This is an eternal election, made by His mercy alone, preceding all merit. In execution of the divine decrees Jesus, when He lived on earth, first called us: "Come unto Me", said He, "all ye that labor and are heavy laden" (Mat. XI, 21); "if any man thirst, let him come to Me, and drink" (John VII, 37). "No man can come to Me, unless My Father draw him" (John VI, 44). He called His disciples when they were least

thinking of it; and more than this: He called St. Paul when, full of fury, he wished to destroy His worship and His holy name. Thus He calls us first, without our having merited it, and often when we had forfeited His grace by our offences. The apostle says: The work of God "is not of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy" (Rom. IX, 16). Finally, it is not the work of our industry, our prudence and our efforts, but only of the goodness and clemency of Jesus. Call us, O Lord, "draw me: we will run after Thee to the odor of Thy ointments" (Cant. I, 3); we wait, and hope for all from Thy great mercy.

II. POINT.

"God willeth that all men should be saved" (1 Tim. II, 4). It is for us to will with Him; it is for us to listen to Jesus when He calls us, to follow Him when He draws us, to enter into the way of penance and of the practice of virtue which He opens for us, to run in the paths in which He guides us, to obey Him when He commands, to unite ourselves with Him, with the three disciples, when He chooses us to accompany Him upon the mountain. Jesus left the other disciples at the foot of the mountain, and they remained there without murmur or complaint. In some we observe humility, in others, fervor, and in all, fidelity in corresponding to their vocation. "Let every man abide in the same calling in which He was called" (1 Cor. VII, 20), according to the warning of St. Paul, whether in the world, or at the top of the mountain, which means religious and ecclesiastical perfection. O Jesus, Thou art my God. "My lots are in Thy hands" (Ps. XXV, 16); dispose of me for time and eternity according to Thy good pleasure, and "teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God" (Ps. CXLII, 10).

III. POINT.

“Jesus bringeth them up into a high mountain apart” (Mat. XVII, 1). Evangelical perfection includes the precepts and the counsels of self-renunciation, of crucifixion of the old man, patience, humility, voluntary poverty, and the other virtues which Jesus taught us by word and example; it is that high mountain apart, high by the excellence of its holy practices, apart by its removal from the spirit and maxims of the world. It is, in truth, difficult to ascend; but Jesus walks before us, He smoothes the way, He helps us, and bears us up in difficult passages. He says: “Take My yoke upon you, . . . it is sweet, and My burden light; learn of Me that I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls” (Mat. XI, 29). These are words of life and love, which are so many strong chains to draw us to Jesus. Finally, recollection and retreat in the practice of prayer are also represented by this mountain; for in solitude the air is more serene, the spirit more free, heaven nearer and God more present. Hence we see that our Lord often went to a mountain to spend the night in prayer (Luke VI, 12). How advantageous it is to flee from the tumult of the world, to retire with Jesus, in order to taste “how sweet the Lord is” (Ps. XXXIII, 9), and to consider at leisure that He is a God of goodness! “Blessed are they who dwell in Thy house, O Lord!” (Ps. LXXXIII, 5). “Blessed are they whom Thou hast chosen and taken for Thyself” (Ps. LXI, 5), for after this life they shall dwell in Thy eternal tabernacles.

Second Sunday of Lent.**The Transfiguration.****I. POINT.**

“Jesus was transfigured before them.”

(Mat. XVII, 2.)

Jesus is called “life eternal, which was with the Father and hath appeared unto us” (1 John I, 2). He was seen on earth, “full of grace and truth” (John 1, 14); and, from the moment of His Incarnation, His soul enjoyed the unobstructed vision of God, was inebriated with the torrent of His holy delights, and lived the life of glory, which is eternal life, a glory which immeasurably surpassed the consummated glory of the angels and the saints. Jesus was then, at the same time, happy and suffering, and even in His extreme anguish, in His keenest sufferings, He possessed beatific joy. But, as formerly the Jordan stopped the course of its waters, and, at the word of Joshua, the sun stood still, so by a divine decree the glory of the soul of Jesus Christ was restrained, without communicating itself to His body, that it might remain passible, and that, by His labors and sufferings, the work of our redemption might be accomplished. Jesus, therefore, worked a continual miracle on Himself by His ardent desire to suffer for us: a miracle which He renews every day upon our altars, where He conceals His majesty and glory, to condescend and accommodate Himself to our weakness; a miracle, an effort, a privation, a despoilment, a work of His love, which surely merits that we should do violence to ourselves, to live henceforth only in Him, separating ourselves from all else. O Jesus, as a traveler, be my way and my guide; as enjoying glory, be my repose, my last end and my eternal life.

II. POINT.

At the moment of the Transfiguration, the Eternal Life, which is in the Father, manifested itself (1 John I, 2); Jesus caused a ray of the glory of His soul to gleam upon His body. "His [divine] face did shine as the sun, and His garments became white as snow" (Mat. XVII, 2). This was, on the one hand, the cessation of a miracle, and, on the other, a new prodigy, that a passible and mortal body should be clothed with glory. Its splendor dazzled the eyes of the apostles and struck them with an astonishment so extraordinary, that, according to the sacred text, they became beside themselves, and "fell with their faces to the ground" (Mat. XVII, 6). Oh! if this single ray so charmed them, what is now their rapture, when they see this divine Sun in its full brilliancy! If they were submerged by one drop of the heavenly delights, what do they now experience in the unfathomable ocean, into which they are plunged! If St. Peter exclaimed: "Lord, it is good for us to be here" (Mat. XVII, 6), what does he now say, when he enjoys the good which is above all good, and which includes all others! Jesus, who is the source of our grace on earth, is also the source of our glory in heaven. His radiant and luminous countenance prefigured the future glory of His body, and the whiteness of His garments, the glory of His saints, who would be united to Him; and as this whiteness was only a reflection of the brilliancy of His face, so all the splendor of the saints comes from the glory of Jesus, to whom alone they are indebted. O Jesus, Thou art our grace and our glory; "Thou art the fountain of life" (Ps. XXXV, 10) for time and eternity.

III. POINT.

Jesus wished to enjoy a visible glory only for a moment; on the contrary, He suffered until His death, because He came to suffer and to humble Himself. His life was a constant labor and suffering, and, "joy having been set before Him, He endured the Cross" (Heb. XII, 2). It is also our portion in this vale of tears, a portion which He left to us in ascending to heaven: we ought to esteem it and seek it, and although it is not for us to choose the way of suffering, we may ask for it, and say with a better right than the prodigal son: "Father, give me the portion of substance which falls to me" (Luke XV, 12), that is, humiliation, scorn, the cross; for we must all aspire to glory, but we are to possess it only after this life. Therefore Jesus gives us only a glimpse of it, and immediately hides it, and leads us from Thabor to Calvary, and from a transient apparition of His glory to the Cross, which, according to His example, we must have always present to our mind. Hence David calls Him, at one time, "the King of glory", and, at another, "the Lord of virtues" (Ps. XXIII, 7), because, if in the one He shows His glory, in the other He invites us to the painful acquisition of virtues, of which the Cross is the source and model. O Jesus, recognized by the heavenly Father on Thabor as His beloved Son, and abandoned by Him on Calvary, when "He laid upon Thee the iniquity of us all" (Is. LIII, 6), grant that we may adore Thee glorious, and may imitate Thee suffering, in order that we may merit, by suffering with Thee, to be afterwards glorified with Thee in eternity.

Monday after the Second Sunday of Lent.

"You shall die in your sin."

I. POINT.

"I go away, and you shall seek Me."

(John VIII, 21.)

I am going to die, said Jesus, for those who do not deserve to live, for ungrateful creatures so unworthy of My love. I am going to die for them, simply through the mercy which induced Me to descend from the highest heavens to visit them; I will be lifted up upon the Cross, and there I will suffer death. He adds: You shall seek Me to take away My life, before the hour which I have chosen; but in vain, for no one can take away My life; I will lay it down voluntarily at the moment appointed by My Father, and I will take it up again, when it shall please Me (John X, 17). The life of Jesus was so precious, that a single instant of it was worth more than the eternity of angels and of men. All the powers of the world and of hell could not shorten it against His will; so that He gave it and took it up again when He willed, according to the inspiration of His charity. O inestimable charity of Jesus, who died to deliver us from a more fatal death, and to give us eternal life! "Let us also go, that we may die with Him" (John XI, 16) to sin, to the world and to ourselves.

II. POINT.

"I go." Jesus threatens to withdraw from us, and to deprive us of His lights and graces. O what could we dread more! The fear of God, which is the gift of the Holy Ghost, makes us apprehend two things above all: to be separated from God, our only and sovereign good, and, by offending Him, to displease this kind Father, so worthy of all our love. What is more ter-

rible? But what a happiness to possess God without fear of losing Him! This is the difference between the saints in this world and the saints who reign in heaven. Here below no one, however holy he may be, can have an infallible certainty of his salvation, nor answer for himself, that he will not lose the grace and love of God through his own fault. What a source of cruel anxiety is this constant danger of becoming the enemy of God! But the blessed are so united to Him, that they can never be separated from Him. Their understanding cannot be turned away from His truth, nor their hearts from His love, for they are in the continual exercise of adoration, of contemplation, of charity: nothing can interrupt it; they know it, and this knowledge renders their felicity perfect. O height of all happiness, the possession of God certain, and known to be so for all eternity!

III. POINT.

“You shall die in your sin” (John VIII, 21). There are three powerful motives of fear. The first is, that no one can know anything with certainty in regard to his eternal predestination. Who can say: I am written in the Book of Life, I am among the number of the elect. An uncertainty which should humble us, and make us tremble under the hand of God, but which should not disquiet us; for it is sufficient for us to know that He loves us, that He wills our salvation, that all our good comes from Him and our ruin from ourselves (Osee XIII, 9). The second motive is, that for the present “no one knows whether he is worthy of love or of hatred” (Eccles. IX, 1), whether his actions and his labors, however good they may seem to him, are pleasing to God or not. Confidence in His goodness does not remove this fear. Then let him “that glorieth,

glory in the Lord; for not he who commendeth himself is approved, but he whom God commendeth" (2 Cor. X, 17). St. Paul says elsewhere: "I am not conscious to myself of anything; but I am not thereby justified" (1 Cor. IV, 4). "Let us, then, work out our salvation in fear and trembling" (Phil. II, 12). Finally, who knows whether he will persevere and die in grace, surrounded, as we are, by so many perils, snares, and dangers; this is the third motive for fear at all times. What a misfortune to die in sin! O Jesus, may this terrible threat of Thy anger never fall upon me; make me live as I desire to die!

Tuesday after the Second Sunday of Lent.

We have one Father and one Master.

I. POINT.

"Be not you called Rabbi" (Mat. XXIII, 8.)

Jesus establishes maxims very opposite to those of earth. In His kingdom he who wishes to be great, must become little; he who wishes to be exalted, must humble himself; he who wishes to command, must obey; finally, he who is master, must become the servant of all: this is precisely the contrary of what is practised in the world. Jesus here forbids us to affect, through ambition, the name of master. He says: "Let him who is the greater among you, become as the younger" (Luke XXII, 26), for, as St. Paul says, he who plants and waters is nothing; but God, who gives the increase, is everything (1 Cor. III, 7). We ought, then, to humble ourselves through the consciousness of our nothingness, esteeming ourselves incapable of any good, adoring the mighty spirit of Jesus, who works interiorly, and referring to Him all the effects of His grace, attributing to ourselves only the obstacles that we

oppose to Him by our infidelities. If God, who made the world out of nothing, deigns to make use of our weakness and nothingness, we ought to give to Him all the glory. O Lord, may I acknowledge that my goods either do not belong to me, or are not true goods; and that my evils are truly evils, and come from me alone.

II. POINT.

“Call none your father upon earth, because one is your Father, who is in heaven; and call none master, because one is your Master, Christ” (Mat. XXIII, 9). We ought to honor Jesus in these two characters of Father and Master. He is our Father, not only according to the body, formed by His power, but according to the soul, created to His image and likeness; not only according to nature, but also according to glory, hence He is called “the Father of the world to come” (Is. IX, 6). St. Paul says that we have not received the spirit of bondage and fear, which is only for slaves, but the spirit of adoption, which is for the children of God (Rom. VIII, 23); a spirit by which we have recourse to Him with confidence, and pray to Him as our Father. Let us no longer call any one by the name of father here below; let us regard those who are clothed with this character for us, and whom God Himself has ordered us to honor, as holding the place of Jesus Christ and representing to us His person and authority; let us likewise regard as masters those who instruct us, and let us listen to the Divine Master who speaks to us by their mouth, who makes Himself heard in the depths of our hearts, when the sound of their voice falls on our ears. O Jesus, Father of mercy, Master full of goodness, give us the hearts of respectful children and faithful disciples.

III. POINT.

“The scribes and pharisees have sat in the chair of Moses. All things, therefore, whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do; but according to their works do ye not” (Mat. XXIII, 2). The word of Jesus Christ is pure, living and life giving, holy and sanctifying, because it derives its purity and holiness from its first source, which is Jesus Himself. It has our Lord for its author and end; for, as it comes from Him, so it leads us to Him. We ought to esteem and obey it, because it comes from God, although often uttered by a sinful man. As bread is not the less white, nor meats less delicious, by whatever hands they may be prepared and served; so the word of God, or the bread of grace in the sacraments, should be always received with respect and docility, from whatever source it may be announced or administered. Jesus is the first agent who speaks and bestows grace; the priests are the organs and secondary causes, their power is attached, not to the holiness of their life, but to their ineffaceable character. Jesus has subjected Himself to their authority in the sacrament of our altars, and He has done so, by an irrevocable and perpetual engagement. He has made Himself dependent, not on their virtue and piety, but on their intention and will. Does He not teach us, then, to obey, without excuse or reply? “God obeying the voice of man” (Jos. X, 14), and that man often a sinner. Shall man refuse to obey God, who speaks to him by these same ministers? But the priest who acts in His name ought to be, as far as possible, the living image of the life and virtue of Jesus.

Wednesday after the Second Sunday of Lent.**Share in Christ's chalice.****I. POINT.**

Two disciples of Jesus asked Him through their mother, to be placed in His kingdom, the one at His right hand, the other at His left, and Jesus, addressing Himself to them, said: "Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink?" (Mat. XX, 22.)

Jesus calls His Passion a chalice, because it was the portion given Him by His Father, as formerly at banquets the father of the family gave to each one his portion and his cup; hence the psalmist says: "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup" (Ps. XV, 5). Perhaps also Jesus gives the same name to the torments that He was to endure for us, because he who is pressed by thirst, does not so gladly drink a glass of water, or some refreshing liquor, as Jesus, thirsting for our salvation, sighed for His Cross; perhaps, finally, this name represents that, as he who salutes another in drinking invites him to drink, so Jesus, in drinking the chalice of His sufferings, presents it to us, and invites us to suffer with Him. Doubtless it is for this reason, that He said to His Father: "Let this chalice pass from Me" (Mat. XXVI, 39); let it pass from My hands to those of My children and My saints, as the Fathers explain it; let them have part in My sufferings, let them share My ignominy and My sorrows, that they may acquire the right to share My glory and My kingdom. O Jesus, give us a share in Thy Passion; give us a great desire, a desire like Thine own, to suffer for Thee and with Thee.

II. POINT.

Jesus offers us the chalice of His Passion, before promising to make us sit at His right hand; because He

passed from the Cross to repose, and from humiliations to the throne of His Father. It was necessary that Christ should suffer, and thus enter into His glory. "We must suffer with Him, that we may be glorified with Him" (Rom. VIII, 17). The happiness of heaven is acquired only at the cost of labors and trials here below; it is a kingdom which "suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away" (Mat. XI, 12). This is the way in which Jesus walked first, and He taught it to us. This present life is a life of sufferings, of combats and afflictions; and the future life, which we are expecting, and to which we aspire, is a life of glory and felicity. O eternal happiness, worthy to be esteemed, desired and purchased at the cost of all that is not God, since it has been acquired for us by the merits and death of God Himself. O Jesus, whatever it may cost me, grant that I may one day find a place at Thy right hand among Thy elect.

III. POINT.

"Can you drink of the chalice that I shall drink?" Jesus presents to us this same chalice, and could we refuse to drink it after Him? Does not the impression of His sacred lips render it sweet and consoling? He has exhausted all its bitterness, and the sufferings which He demands of us are infinitely less than those which He endured for us. He suffered without consolation, and He becomes our comforter, our strength in the miseries which He sends us. He said: "I am with him in tribulation" (Ps. XC, 15). To suffer and to be afflicted with Jesus is a happier lot than to enjoy, without Him, all the pleasures of the world. It was this union with Jesus, which enabled the martyrs to despise the most terrible threats, and the most magnificent promises. It made them trample under foot, and regard with

contempt, sceptres and crowns, and behold with holy intrepidity the preparations for the most barbarous and cruel tortures. O sacred beverage, chalice of sorrow and love; of love and pure suffering for Jesus; and for us suffering changed into sweetness by the power of love.

Thursday after the Second Sunday of Lent.

Temporal evils, a preparation for endless happiness.

I. POINT.


*“There was a rich man who was clothed in purple
and fine linen.” (Luke XVI, 19.)*

Jesus shows us to-day the bad rich man “buried in hell”, and the poor “Lazarus borne by the angels to Abraham’s bosom” (Luke XVI, 22); the one tormented in the flames, the other consoled by the certain hope of glory. As justice consists in these two things, to avoid evil and to do good (Ps. XXXVI, 27), the Saviour proposes this parable to us with this two-fold intention. He wishes to withdraw us from evil by the fear of eternal torments, and He causes us to descend alive into hell (Ps. LIV, 16), that we may not descend there after our death. Therefore, it is expedient that we should go there during this life by a vivid apprehension of its torments, in order to avoid descending into it in reality after death, and suffering the fearful anguish which is there endured. Afterwards our Lord attracts us to do good by the sight of the rest and consolations enjoyed by the just after they have left the earth. Hence fear which causes us to avoid evil, and love which induces us to do good, are the two pivots upon which the whole Christian life revolves. O good Jesus, imprint in me Thy fear and Thy love; the one, that I may apprehend Thy justice and dread Thy anger; the other, that I may

correspond to Thy charity and become worthy of Thy favors. But if I should have the misfortune to be insensible to Thy love, at least may the severity of Thy punishments prevent me from offending Thee.

II. POINT.

“Son, remember that in thy life thou didst receive good things, and Lazarus evil things” (Luke XVI, 25). Nothing will be more painful to the damned soul, than the remembrance of the goods which she enjoyed, the pleasures, riches, honors, which she loved too much, and which were the cause of her ruin; she will see, but too late, their deceit and emptiness. She will feel the most cruel bitterness in the thought that for her all is past forever; this thought is the interior worm, which will never die, but will exist as long as the inextinguishable fire (Mark IX, 47). The remembrance of the graces and of the means of salvation, which she has neglected and abused, will also present itself to her; this tormented the miserable rich man: “Son, remember”; he was a child of Abraham, a member of the chosen people of God, he had Moses and the prophets. What will it be, then, for those who have enjoyed and, at the same time, abused the graces and fruits of the coming of Christ, who have been nourished in His Church with His word and His sacraments, and, above all, with that of His most precious Body. The excellence of these gifts will render the account more terrible and the remembrance more bitter. Not one of their sins will be effaced from their minds. O what remorse, what cruel memories! Let us prevent them now, recounting our years in the bitterness of our souls (Is. XXXVIII, 15); let us think of our last end, regarding it not as remote, but as near at hand; not in a general manner, and as something foreign to us, but as a thing



which regards us, and concerns us individually; not as an event indifferent and doubtful, but important and certain. Nothing is more certain than death, judgment, hell, and paradise; but our lot in relation to these is uncertain. "O Lord, fear and trembling have come upon me" (Ps. LIV, 6). I tremble with fear, lest I myself, who read, who hear, or who write this, may be a castaway (1 Cor. IX, 27). Permit it not, O Lord, in Thy great mercy.

III. POINT.

The one is comforted, and the other is tormented. An exchange equally frightful and unforeseen. Lazarus suffered evil things during his life, whilst the rich man was surrounded with delights: these delights and these evils have passed away for both; but how different are the results! Lazarus receives all goods in their source: in exchange for his sores, he enjoys ineffable consolation; for his labors, eternal repose; for his hunger and beggary, a happy abundance. The rich man, on the contrary, for his enjoyment, so short and fleeting, endures all evils heaped upon his guilty head. From the midst of the flames he beholds Lazarus happy and full of joy, and this sight afflicts him as much as his pains. Heaven burns him more than hell, says St. Chrysostom; this is what had been predicted: "Behold My servants shall eat, and you shall be hungry; My servants shall drink, and you shall be thirsty. Behold My servants shall rejoice, and you shall be confounded; behold My servants shall praise for joyfulness of heart, and you shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for grief of spirit" (Is. LXV, 14). The rich man exclaims that he is tormented, not *by* the flames, but *in* the flames, says St. Chrysostom, to show that he suffers not only by the fire, but that he is punished in as many different ways

as he has sinned (Wis. XI, 17); for his looks full of pride and contempt he sees the poor man in honor; for his hardheartedness he endures a punishment without mercy. But to whom does Jesus address this parable? It is to His disciples, who had left all to follow Him. He converses with them on the most terrible truths, to teach us to work out our salvation in fear and trembling; for who will not believe the word of Jesus, or who will consider himself more just than the apostles? O Lord, cut, smite, burn, says St. Augustine, spare me not in this life, provided Thou dost pardon me for eternity.

Friday after the Second Sunday of Lent.

The Synagogue, the Church, the parable of the vineyard.

I. POINT.

“A householder planted a vineyard.”

(Mat. XXI, 33.)

God the Father, and Lord of the universe, created the rational soul and placed it in a body formed from the slime of the earth. He planted it as a vine upon the earth, and breathed into the face of man “the breath of life” (Gen. II, 7). This expression—breathed—shows that God made man simply by the inspiration of His goodness: He imprinted on him the image of His divinity; He raised him above all visible creatures, and enriched him with many gifts of nature and of grace. St. Paul says: “Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not the fruit thereof?” (1 Cor. IX, 7). If, then, the vineyard of our souls belongs to God by so many claims, for whom should it bring forth fruit, unless for Him alone, for His honor and glory? To whom should we refer all our actions, if not to Him and His most holy love?

II. POINT.

The Synagogue was formerly a vineyard planted by the hand of God, by the ministry of the angels and Moses. At different times God sent to it His ministers, His prophets, finally, His own Son, to gather its fruits; but alas! He found only thorns. The only-begotten Son of God, coming into the world, established His Church: this is the house which He built upon the solid rock, this is the tree which He grafted, this is the vineyard which He planted, which He cultivated by His labors, watered with His Blood, and loaded with graces and with the gifts of His holy Spirit. Behold the excellence of the New Law and of the Church, which was founded by Jesus Christ Himself; for the Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John I, 17). Are we not, then, a thousand times more ungrateful than the Jews, more unworthy of the favors of God, more deserving of condemnation and experiencing the effect of His threat: He will destroy these evil men without pity, and will hire His vineyard to others, who will bring Him the fruits thereof (Mat. XXI, 41). If we do not acknowledge His benefits; if we do not fulfil His desires; if we do not co-operate with His graces; if we do not respect God's only-begotten and beloved Son, according to the expectation of the Father of the family, if, like the Jews, we reject Him, and if by sin we "crucify Him afresh" in our hearts (Heb. VI, 6), what condemnation must we not expect?

III. POINT.

Jesus Christ, having planted His vineyard, neglected nothing to preserve it, to cultivate it, and to render it fruitful: "What ought I to have done to My vineyard," says He, "that I have not done?" (Is. V, 4). He sur-

rounded it with a hedge, which represents to us either the angels, whom He has appointed to guard His Church and each one of her children, as the psalmist teaches us: "The angel of the Lord shall encamp round about those who fear Him" (Ps. XXXIII, 8); or the special Providence of God over His children, as is said elsewhere: "The Lord is round about His people" (Ps. CXXIV, 2); or, finally, the continual assistance and attentive love of Jesus for His Church and our souls, which He expresses by these words: "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of ages" (Mat. XXVIII, 20). O goodness, O attention of Jesus, worthy of eternal gratitude! He also placed in His vineyard a press, which is the Cross upon which He was pressed and gave forth the wine of His precious Blood even to the last drop; the sacred Altar is also the press, from which by the effort of His divine charity His adorable Blood flows unceasingly over us and into us. O Blood of Jesus, precious wine which produces virgins (Zach. IX, 17), purify us, sanctify us! Finally, He built a tower. This represents the firmness and stability of the Church, "against which the powers of hell shall not prevail" (Mat. XVI, 18). It also represents the holy Apostolic See, whose continual vigilance extends over the whole Catholic world. With regard to our souls, it represents grace and charity, on which we should be so founded and rooted (Eph. III, 17), that each one may defy all creatures to separate him from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. VIII, 39).

Saturday after the Second Sunday of Lent.

The prodigal son.

I. POINT.

The prodigal son is the figure of the sinner, who descends step by step into the abyss of sin. His first

step is presumption, by which he dares to ask of God, as the prodigal did of his father: "Give me the portion of substance that falls to me" (Luke XV, 12), attributing to himself what he ought to expect only from the goodness and liberality of God. Must we be astonished, if afterwards he wishes to live independent of this good father, if he departs from his house and leaves the Sovereign Good, to attach himself to creatures; for always "the spirit is lifted before a fall" (Prov. XVI, 18). Then he goes away to a far country, he runs after vice, vanity and the liberty of the world; but alas! the world which has only this good, that the more it is used, the more it disgusts, the more it is known, the more it displeases, begins to be a burden to him; its delights become a real torment, and sin, which always bears its penalty with it, leaves no rest to the guilty soul. The sinner loses the goods of heaven, and he begs for those of earth; but in vain, for he remains deprived of both; he experiences and knows what a bitter thing it is to have abandoned his God for a trifle, for a mere nothing, and to leave the source of living waters for the broken cisterns of the world. Yet happy in his misfortune, if this his knowledge does not remain barren and fruitless.

II. POINT.

The prodigal, entering into himself, said: "How many hired servants in my father's house abound with bread, and I here perish with hunger" (Luke XV, 17). Here is the return and the first step of the sinner towards God. When, enlightened from above, he enters into himself and rouses himself from his profound lethargy, he perceives the light, and the light helps him to know the number of his sins, his ingratitude, and the danger to which he has exposed his salvation. At the

creation the light was made first; so, in the justification of the sinner, a ray of grace comes first to enlighten him, as is said of Magdalen: "When she had known" (Luke VII, 37), and of St. Paul: "A light from heaven shone round about him" (Acts IX, 3). What great things does this light produce! It inspires a strong resolution to return to God, a confidence in His mercy which overcomes the fear of His justice, and which makes the sinner say: "I will arise and go to my father" (Luke XV, 18). And when a sincere interior sorrow is joined to this, God has already received and pardoned him. I said, "I will confess my injustice, and Thou didst forgive the wickedness of my sin" (Ps. XXXI, 5). O great goodness of God, which not only promises pardon, but remits and effaces sin, on the mere promise of confession, and the resolution to do penance, which are fruits of charity ruling in the heart.

III. POINT.

"When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion" (Luke XV, 20). These words show us three kinds of graces which God gives to the penitent sinner. The first is preventing grace. When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and ran to meet him: thus God anticipates us by various movements and interior lights, and often by exterior objects, as He did St. Paul by the voice from heaven, and St. Antony by the reading of the Gospel. "He kissed him"; this is a second grace which sustains the soul, and co-operates with her, humbling her and inspiring her with supernatural sorrow. St. Paul said: It is not I, but "the grace of God in me" (1 Cor. XV, 10), and if the same apostle assures us, that of ourselves we cannot have even a good thought (2 Cor. III, 5), much less are we of ourselves capable of a perfect return

to God. A third grace is represented by the embrace of the prodigal's father; this follows and completes true conversion, which is made by the humble confession of our faults with a contrite heart, full of confusion and regret. "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son" (Luke XV, 21). Because these three graces are given to us gratuitously, this good father was moved with mercy and compassion. Let us, then say with David: The mercy of the Lord shall go before me (Ps. LVIII, 11); "it surrounds those who hope in Him" (Ps. XXXI, 10). "Thy mercy, Lord, shall follow me all the days of my life" (Ps. XXII, 6). "Bring the best robe" (Luke XV, 22). Behold the effect and the fruit of all these graces, justification and interior renewal, when the sinner, stripping himself of the old man, is clothed with the new (Eph. IV, 22), with his virtues and his holiness. O Jesus, I am that ungrateful and prodigal son, for whom Thy goodness is moved: say, then, to Thy angels, or to Thy sacred ministers: "Bring the best robe" quickly. May my soul be restored to Thy grace and love! May this love increase unceasingly, and may I never more have the misfortune to lose it!

Third Sunday of Lent.

Christ overthrows the devil.

I. POINT.

"Jesus cast out a devil" (Luke XI, 14).

Jesus came into the world to cast out "the prince of the world" (John XII, 31), according to the promise of God, that the posterity of the woman should "crush the serpent's head" (Gen. III, 15). The occupation of Jesus, whilst He dwelt on earth, was to deliver souls and bodies from the devils that possessed them; and

He does this still, reigning in heaven, converting and justifying sinners. His holy humanity was dreaded by the evil spirits, for it possessed an efficacious and sovereign power over them. His holiness destroyed their malice, His humility subdued their pride, and His authority crushed their efforts and compelled them to take flight. This made them exclaim: "What have we to do with Thee, Jesus of Nazareth?" (Luke IV, 34). Thou art come to destroy us; we know that Thou art "the holy One of God". O Jesus, who art called "the Lord strong and mighty" (Ps. XXIII, 8), come, complete Thy victories in me; by Thee may I be delivered from the temptations of my enemies. "Thou hast prepared a table before me" (Ps. XXII, 5) against all the troubles which they excite; and since Thou dost vouchsafe to feed me with the same sacred Flesh in which and by which Thou hast conquered them, permit them not to have any power over me, or to separate me from Thy holy love.

II. POINT.

Jesus established His peaceful reign throughout the world, destroying the empire of Satan, according to what had been predicted and prefigured by that little stone, which, detaching itself without the hand of man, struck the statue, overthrew it, reduced it to dust, and became a great mountain which filled the whole earth (Dan. II, 34). What can better represent the establishment of the Church, and of the kingdom of Jesus Christ upon the ruins of the devil and idolatry? For our Lord has confounded them, not by His strength, but by His weakness and the folly of the Cross. As David overcame Goliath with his sling and a few pebbles (1 Kings XVII, 50), so Jesus, with His Cross and His five wounds, overthrew the evil spirit and took away his power.

This made St. Antony say that the prince of darkness fears nothing so much as the love of Jesus crucified, and that he takes flight at the mere sign of this holy Cross. According to the testimony of even profane historians, as soon as Jesus appeared in the world, the oracles of the false gods were silent, and the idols were broken. O Jesus, when Thou dost come into my soul in holy Communion, may the idols of my passions fall, may they be broken and destroyed by Thee. By the virtue of Thy crucified Flesh, cast out from me the devil of pride, of concupiscence and self-love.

III. POINT.

“The last state of that man becomes worse than the first” (Luke XI, 26). If Jesus has conquered for us, if He has driven the devil from our hearts, if He has destroyed the idol of our passions and vices; in a word, if He has given us the grace of conversion to Himself, let us not yet believe that we are in safety; but let us watch over our souls, since Jesus warns us that even after He has entered into us and delivered us from sin, and filled us with His grace, we should still fear lest the devil, thus driven out and put to flight, should return to the charge, and finding us sanctified and adorned with the gifts of God, should redouble his efforts to enslave us anew. This is what is meant by “the seven spirits more wicked than himself, whom he brings” to enter with him (Luke XI, 26). This return is so much the more astonishing, as by the words of our Lord, we see no cause for it, except that our soul is found empty: From this we learn that we should not rest in an idle security, relying on what we have already done, or rather upon what God has done in us, but we should labor unceasingly to purify ourselves more and more, and to strengthen ourselves in grace by the practice of virtue

and good works. We should not glory in our penance, or our righteousness; for as soon as a vain pride takes possession of our minds, the devil introduces himself at the same time; and when we attribute to ourselves some good, or despise others, we lose our justice, and open the door to this enemy: therefore it behooves us to "watch and pray". Our Lord says: "Blessed is that servant whom, when his master cometh, he shall find watching" (Luke XII, 37). We should keep ourselves united to our good Master by a constant and active love, for He says: "He that is not with Me, is against Me" (Luke XI, 23). O Jesus, who hast conquered the strong man armed, and driven him from our hearts, permit him not to return, and let us not lose the fruit of Thy victories by pride, idleness and other infidelities.

Monday after the Third Sunday of Lent.

God shows His mercy in His chastisements.

I. POINT.

*"As great wonders as we have heard done in
Capharnaum, do Thou also here in Thy
own country."* (Luke IV, 23.)

Nazareth was the chosen spot where the two greatest miracles were accomplished: the Incarnation of the Eternal Word, the source of all the other mysteries and the foundation of our salvation; and the divine maternity of Mary, the source of all her excellence. Nazareth, consecrated by the childhood and the abode of Jesus till the age of thirty years, became the house of God, the gate of heaven, and the tabernacle of the New Covenant in which is found the true Holy of Holies. If Jesus did not wish to perform miracles there, it was as much through mercy as through justice: through mercy, because its inhabitants would not have believed, and would thus have become more guilty; through jus-

tice, because of their ingratitude and unworthiness. Thus, although we have received the great graces of regeneration, of the pouring forth of the Holy Ghost, and the use of the sacraments, and above all the Divine Eucharist, we complain that we are deprived of other graces, which are their effects and fruits, without perceiving that we are deprived of them because of our abuse of the former. O Jesus, I ought not to complain of Thee, but of myself, for in spite of Thy goodness, I check the course of Thy liberality and compel Thee to withdraw Thy graces; take from me all that could oppose any obstacle to Thee, and look with compassion upon my indigence, rather than on my unworthiness.

II. POINT.

“No prophet is accepted in his own country” (Luke IV, 24). Jesus shows us by these words, that He received the power of working miracles, not from earth, but from heaven; that the extraordinary favors of God ought not to be sought for, but only received with humility; that they are not due to flesh and blood, to the great of the world, or to them who imagine themselves worthy; for God “looketh on the low, and the high He knoweth afar off” (Ps. CXXXVII, 6); that is, He resists the proud, and gives His grace to the humble and simple. Jesus teaches us also to detach ourselves from sentiments and affections that are too natural. He says: “If any man come to Me, and hate not his father and mother, . . . and brethren, . . . yea his own life also, he cannot be My disciple” (Luke XIV, 26). These words are not opposed to the honor and love, which He commands us to have for them; but He regulates this love, which must be subordinate to our love for Him. O Jesus, tear from my heart every irregular attachment for relatives, friends, or myself, that, loving

Thee purely, I may be worthy to be numbered among
Thy happy disciples.

III. POINT.

“Jesus, passing through the midst of them, went His way” (Luke IV, 30). Jesus passes tranquilly and without fear among His enemies; He takes from them either the light to see Him, or the power to lay hands upon Him, because His hour had not yet come: a miracle sufficient to convert them, if they had not been blinded by their own malice. When Jesus wills, He is taken, and when He wills, He escapes, and this is an effect of His power; but when He is delivered to His enemies, it is the effect, or rather the effort of His immense charity. But if this Divine Sun is not discerned, if He is eclipsed under the shadow of our mortality, is our blindness more pardonable when we do not see Him in the midst of His glory? How often does He enter into us really in holy Communion, and spiritually by His grace, without our thinking of it or feeling the effects of His grace. These words are accomplished for our misfortune: “He was in the world, and the world knew Him not; the light shone in the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not” (John I, 5 and 10). Jesus penetrates and fills all by His immensity; He is present to all: we cannot hide ourselves from His sight; yet we sin in His presence, we offend Him under His very eyes. O blindness! O insensibility! O ingratitude! Jesus sees us, to do us good; “He hath looked upon the earth and filled it with His goods” (Eccli. XVI, 30), and we turn away from Him, that we may do evil more freely! O Jesus, who didst say to the father of the faithful: “Walk before Me and be perfect” (Gen. XVII, 1), imprint upon me a reverential awe, and a loving attention to Thy divine presence.

Tuesday after the Third Sunday of Lent.**Fraternal correction.****I. POINT.**

“If thy brother shall offend against thee, go, rebuke him between him and thee alone.”

(Mat. XVIII, 15.)

We ought to believe that only he sins against us, who sins against God before us; we ought to regard as done against us only what offends God, or what incites us to offend Him: therefore, zeal for His glory should make us feel keenly all the sins committed against Him; we ought to be moved thereby, and to be filled and penetrated with sorrow. “Have I not hated them, O Lord, that hated Thee,” said David, “and pined away because of Thine enemies? I have hated them with a perfect hatred, and they are become enemies to me” (Ps. CXXXVIII, 22). It is not, then, our own interest which should animate us to give fraternal correction, but a two-fold zeal for the honor of God and for the salvation of souls dear to Him. Jesus wishes us not only to forgive those who have wronged us, but also to “do good to them and pray for them” (Mat. V, 44). He taught us this by word and example; therefore, this correction should be the effect of our love for God and of our charity for our neighbor. O Jesus, may I love Thee, and my neighbor in Thee and for Thee! For love is Thy great commandment which includes all the others.

II. POINT.

Holy Scripture gives us a model and a figure of fraternal correction in the conduct of Eliseus raising the widow's son to life. He did four things: he closed the door; he prayed to the Lord; he stretched himself on the child; he warmed him (4 Kings IV, 34). To give

correction successfully, we must first close the door, that is, we should do it secretly; for our Lord says: "Rebuke him between thee and him alone"; we should address ourselves to God, praying to Him, invoking the guardian angel of him who is to be reproved; we should bow down and accommodate ourselves to him, considering our own defects, and bear without bitterness those which we correct in others; according to the counsel of St. Paul: "If any one be overtaken in a fault, instruct him in a spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. VI, 1); finally, we should warm him, treating him with sincere and perfect charity. These dispositions are reduced to four virtues, which should be inseparable from correction: prudence, prayer, meekness and charity. Clothe us, O Jesus, with Thy holy dispositions, that, according to Thy will, we may accomplish what Thou dost command.

III. POINT.

"If he hear thee, thou wilt have gained thy brother" (Mat. XVIII, 15). What does this mean: "thou wilt have gained", except that he was lost. And how was he lost, if not by sinning against thee who art his brother? Let no one deceive himself, saying: I have not sinned against God, but only against my brother, and this is a little thing, or nothing at all; for, says St. Paul: "When you sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ" (1 Cor. VIII, 12), because we are all His members, and He regards as done to Himself, what is done to the least of His disciples (Mat. XXV, 40). What is the value of a soul for which the Son of God has given His life? God esteems it so much that He did not spare His only-begotten Son to save it. The price of a soul is the blood, the life and the death of a God; for this reason

St. Paul says: "You are bought with a great price, glorify God, and bear Him in your bodies" (1 Cor. VI, 20). How noble is this duty! For it is great for the creature to co-operate in the salvation of a soul, and it is an infinite honor to the sacred ministers to be called to it by their state; others may and ought to labor in this work, but simply by their prayers, good examples, pious conversations, and fraternal corrections, recommended to all according to the rules of prudence. Let us say as David said concerning his son Absalom: "Who would grant that I might die for thee" (2 Kings XVIII, 33). O soul so dear, so precious to Jesus Christ! Would that I could die for thee, since Jesus Himself willed to die to give thee life.

Wednesday after the Third Sunday of Lent.

The law of God.

I. POINT.

"Why do you transgress the commandments of God to follow your tradition?"

(Mat. XV, 3.)

No one attributes this reproach of Jesus to himself, although it is applicable to many who prefer the manners and customs of the world to the most important maxims of the Gospel. If any one would wish to form his life according to that of the greater part of modern Christians, would he find in it any traces of the spirit of Jesus Christ? Would he not, on the contrary, find therein and in their morals a formal opposition and perpetual contradiction to the spirit of the Gospel? By their faith they confess the necessity of humility and of the forgiveness of injuries, but the world teaches that the least offences must be avenged, if we do not wish to expose ourselves to new insults. They listen to this;

they follow the world, and, like it, they are proud, ambitious and vindictive. "Why, then, do you thus transgress the laws of God to follow your tradition? Why do you follow this blind guide, which, leading the blind, drags them "into the ditch", that is, into hell. Jesus teaches us contempt of riches, the danger of worldly pleasures; He points out the narrow way, the necessity of doing ourselves violence, of suffering and passing through many tribulations to reach His kingdom, and almost all avoid sufferings; they seek their pleasure and satisfaction, and proclaim: Blessed are the rich of the world! Thus they render the law of God vain, in order to establish their traditions, and so their life becomes empty of good works and even sinful. O Jesus, "the wicked have told me fables; but not as Thy law. All Thy statutes are truth" (Ps. CXVIII, 85). I have seen the violators of Thy law, and "I have pined away because they keep not Thy law"; I hold their iniquity in horror, but Thy law is the object of my love.

II. POINT.

"Every plant which My Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Mat. XV, 13). Doctrines, or teachings, opposed to the faith of the Church, and "the wisdom of the flesh which is the enemy of God" (Rom. VIII, 7), are plants of Satan; and although they appear to flourish for a time, they are finally rooted out and destroyed; for "the world passes away with the concupiscence thereof" (1 John II, 17); but the doctrine of Jesus, taught by His Church, and the simplicity of the Christian life, although persecuted, shall never perish: "the truth of the Lord", and he who does His will, "remain forever" (Ps. CXVI, 2). God created man as a good plant, but man was perverted by sin, and this is the reproach which He makes to him: I have planted

you a chosen and precious vineyard, but how have you degenerated! (Jer. II, 21). Instead of the virtues and good works which I expected, you have produced only vices. Our Lord will root out these weeds; He so abhors sin, that He destroys it everywhere: formerly He deluged the world and destroyed five wicked cities, to destroy sin which reigned in them; thus He exterminated the sinners with the sin, the plants with the earth. Now, under the law of grace, He roots out the plants, and blesses the ground; He destroys sin and saves the sinner. He does this especially in the sacrament of penance; but they who abuse it, will finally be rooted out as weeds by the awful sentence of the Sovereign Judge. Then they will no longer be able to bear fruits of justice, and for them "time shall be no more" (Apoc. X, 6). O Jesus, may all that is of me be destroyed, so that all that is of Thee may remain and bring forth fruit for Thy glory.

III. POINT.

"From the heart come forth evil thoughts, and these are the things which defile man" (Mat. XV, 19). Sin is so completely voluntary, that, to be such, it must proceed from the heart and the will; so that the eyes, the hands, and the other corporal senses are not capable of sinning, unless they are moved and commanded by the will; and no action, no motion can be called sin, unless it springs from this root. Therefore, St. Paul boldly defies all creatures to separate him from the love of God (Rom. VIII, 39); but he does not include self-will, because it alone can deprive us of grace and divine love. Nothing else in the world can force us, or compel us to offend God. In like manner also nothing is worthy of eternal life, but what springs from the heart. This made the Wise Man say: Guard well your heart,

for it is the source of life (Prov. IV, 23); and God asks only for our heart: "Son, give Me thy heart" (Prov. XXIII, 26). He does not wish it only in part, but entire; not for a time, but by an irrevocable donation. All the actions, either natural or indifferent, which spring from the heart, when given to God, are elevated, and become supernatural, worthy of grace and glory. O admirable capacity of our heart for good! Since all that it wills and desires, although it may never be accomplished, God regards as already done. O Jesus, "create in me a clean heart" (Ps. L, 12), worthy of being all Thine; possess my will, and render it always, and in every event, united and submissive to Thine.

Thursday after the Third Sunday of Lent.

The Church founded on Jesus Christ.

I. POINT.

"Jesus entered into Simon's house."

(Luke IV, 38.)

The house of St. Peter, into which our Lord enters to-day, represents the Church which He founded upon a firm rock, and outside of which there is no salvation; a house which the Eternal Wisdom built, and supported upon seven pillars (Prov. IX, 1), which are the seven sacraments; He placed in it the table of the Sacred Altar, and upon this table the bread and wine of the Divine Eucharist. He chose this house for His abode, and it is written: "The Lord hath exalted Sion, and hath chosen it for His habitation" (Ps. CXXXI, 13); for Jesus remains always with His Church by His Real Presence in the August Sacrament, from which He rules it, governs it and protects it by a perpetual assistance of His grace and Holy Spirit. O house of God, gate of heaven, hall for the wedding feast of the Lamb, taber-

nacle of the New Covenant which God has contracted with us. "Blessed are they, O Lord, who dwell in Thy house" (Ps. LXXXIII, 5), in Thy Church! Make me live and die, numbered among her children, who are Thine. Grant that I may live a holy life, since "holiness becometh Thy house", O Lord (Ps. XCII, 5).

II. POINT.

"Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever" (Luke IV, 38). We see in this woman a picture of the unhappy state to which sin has reduced us, and of the internal fever caused by our passions, which can be cured only by Jesus Christ, the great Physician, who came down from heaven. He alone by His all-powerful will expels disease, and our cure is a work of His goodness alone. As we need Him to cure us at every moment, because we fall and wound ourselves at every step, we should not cease to have recourse to Him. Fever is then the figure of sin, which produces in the soul effects similar to those that fever causes in the body. It agitates and disturbs; it weakens and corrupts all the faculties. In one this fever is pride or envy; in another it is love of pleasure or hatred of the neighbor. We ought first to discover what kind of fever we have, for each one has one peculiar to himself; and if we wish to avoid violent attacks, we should strive to prevent the strong emotions which lead to them. When we have become conscious of our disease and know what passion predominates in us, we should hate and combat it; and feeling our inability to cure ourselves, we should go to Jesus Christ with lively faith and humble confidence. O Jesus, heavenly Physician, equally good and powerful to heal us, "heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee" (Ps. XL, 5).

III. POINT.

“Jesus commanded the fever, and it left her” (Luke IV, 39). Thus also “Jesus commanded the winds and the sea, and there came a great calm” (Mat. VIII, 26). All creatures acknowledge the majesty and submit to the authority of their sovereign Lord, not because they are animated and endowed with reason, but because things, insensible with regard to us, are not so in reference to God, and are always perfectly submissive to Him. O power of God, known, so to speak, even to inanimate things! If they obey Thy supreme power, shall not I, O Lord, be submissive to Thy loving goodness? If they are naturally subject to Thy orders, shall my will alone resist Thine? “Shall not my soul be subject to God?” (Ps. LXI, 2). And if, to exalt obedience, Thou didst become obedient, O Lord, not only to God Thy Father, but also to men in Thy life and in Thy death, shall I refuse to obey Thee and those invested with Thy authority, for love of Thee? Imprint in my soul and all my faculties a happy inability to do anything whatsoever against Thee, or without Thee.

Friday after the Third Sunday of Lent.

Greatness of God's gifts.

I. POINT.

“Jesus, wearied with His journey, sat thus on Jacob's well.” (John IV, 6.)

Jesus is the strength and the power of the Father; near Him they who are weary find refreshment; on the contrary, far from Him they find only weakness and incapacity. He is the sovereign virtue of God, but for us and in our nature this divine power had its infirmity, for Jesus is, at the same time, strong and weak: strong, because “in the beginning was the Word, and the Word

was God, and all things were made by Him” and without any labor; weak, because “the Word was made flesh” (John I, 1-14). The power of Jesus created us, His weakness redeemed us: by His power what was not began to exist; and by His weakness His work was sustained and repaired. He made us by His power, and He restored us to a new life by His weakness. Jesus walks, toils and labors; and for what? To win the soul of a poor Samaritan woman. Thus He preluded the conversion of the whole world. And, in fact, wearied by the journey and the labors of His whole life, and loaded with contempt, He will soon pour out all His blood upon the ignominious wood of the Cross. There He waits for us to draw us to Himself; there He will find His repose in the noon-day of His burning charity for us. Who could penetrate and recognize worthily the meekness, the zeal, the thirst for our salvation with which Jesus endures the deepest humiliations and the keenest sufferings? He immolates Himself to God His Father, and offers to Him the bloody sacrifice of His life, and all this for the salvation of my sinful soul. O good Jesus, since it is so dear to Thee, and has cost Thee so much, may so many pains and labors not be in vain!

II. POINT.

“If thou didst know the gift of God, and who He is who asks of thee to drink, perhaps thou wouldst have asked of Him” (John IV, 10). The gifts of God are profitable, only as far as they are known and esteemed. If we knew the excellence of the grace acquired at the cost of the blood of Jesus Christ, would we think we could ever do enough to merit it? But if with the gifts we regard Him who gives, Jesus is, at the same time, the Gift and the Giver; for “He loved us and delivered

Himself for us" on the Cross (Gal. II, 20). He renews this gift in the Eucharist: in it He gives Himself and He is given for the life of our souls; it is He who consecrates and is consecrated; He is the Sacrificer and the Sacrifice, the Priest and the Victim; let us say more, it is He who offers, who is offered, and who receives the Sacrifice. O Jesus, we offer Thee to Thyself, in gratitude for Thy gifts. Jesus, who has nothing greater and more divine than Himself, offers Himself to His Father and gives Himself to us in a most excellent manner. Therefore, when approaching the Altar, we ought to meditate upon these words: "If thou didst know the gift of God": a precious gift, an inestimable gift; if thou didst know who it is that comes to thee, and if thou couldst honor and receive Him worthily! O Jesus, "what is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou dost visit him?" (Ps. VIII, 5). Oh, if men knew Thee, could they love or desire any thing outside of Thee!

III. POINT.

"Whosoever shall drink of the water that I will give him, shall never thirst" (John IV, 13). All the waters of created goods, honors, riches, the pleasures of life, are not capable of quenching our thirst, and appeasing our appetite; God alone can fill the capacity of our souls. Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our hearts will always be uneasy till they rest in Thee (St. Augustine). The immortal soul created to the image and likeness of God may, indeed, be occupied with exterior things, but it cannot be satisfied with them: all that is less than God cannot fill a soul capable of receiving God (St. Francis de Sales). On the contrary, who could desire the muddy waters of this world, if he bears within himself the fountain of living water, that

is, Jesus and His grace, according to what He Himself says: "The water that I will give him, shall become in him a fountain springing up into everlasting life" (John IV, 14). Grace, which is the source of living water, is a seed and pledge of glory; it gives us a right to it, or, to speak more correctly, it gives us a right to God Himself, who is the recompense, the life, and the crown of the saints, as He said to Abraham: "I am thy reward exceeding great" (Gen. XV, 1). O power of grace, which, for one single moment, gives us eternity; which renders us worthy of glory, or rather of the God of glory! O excellence of this heavenly water, which gushes forth into eternal life, which it merits for us, and gives to us!

Saturday after the Third Sunday of Lent.

Necessity of prayer.

I. POINT.

"From the Mount of Olives Jesus went to the temple early in the morning."

The Saviour passed the nights in prayer, and the days in teaching: this was the division of His time and His life; retreat and action, the repose of the contemplative life and the exercises of the active life: a very holy example, which should be for us a model of the perfect life, in which we should pass from solitude to exterior things, from the fulness received in prayer to the employments of charity towards our neighbor, either in the sacred functions or by other means, according to our vocation. By this example we learn that solitary and hidden souls accomplish more by humble silence, weeping and praying at the feet of Jesus Christ, than others by their eloquent labors in preaching; in the latter there is more noise, and in the former more fruit. "All the people came to Jesus, and He taught them."

Let us go to Jesus in His temple; there we shall find Him, there He will instruct us, there He will hear our prayers, since it is "the house of prayer" (Is. LVI, 7), the favorable place where men enter into a holy intercourse with God. Let us go, then, at the dawn of day to Jesus in the temple. "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou alone hast the words of eternal life" (John VI, 69). Thou art the "Teacher of justice" (Joel II, 23), whom the Father has given us, and whom He commands us to hear and believe (Mat. XVII, 5). Speak, then, Lord, and make Thyself heard in our hearts.

II. POINT.

"They brought to Him a woman taken in adultery" (John VIII, 3). Sinners come to Jesus, that they may be made just, the sick approach Him, that they may be healed; and since He came down from heaven to earth to seek us, and "to save that which was lost" (Mat. XVIII, 11), is it not reasonable that we should go to meet Him, and accomplish a part of the way? Happy meeting of the misery of the sinner with the mercy of the Saviour! Happy this woman to have found, after her misfortune, so great a protector! "God did not send His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (John III, 17). Sinners in His presence are convicted and confounded in their malice, or, like this woman, are changed, converted and absolved; but no one is condemned except by his own conscience; for Jesus came not to destroy, but to save and sanctify. O Jesus, strike and touch the hearts of sinners with Thy fear, penetrate them with Thy divine love; cover us with a salutary confusion which will lead us to true repentance.

III. POINT.

"Neither will I condemn thee; go, and sin no

more" (John VIII, 11). Jesus conversing upon earth showed forth His clemency and mercy; He never refused to listen to the miserable, because He sincerely wished to help them in their necessities: He did good to all, and did not wish to punish any one. To-day He saves the life of a sinful woman, whom the law condemned to death, and afterwards He restores to her a second and more excellent life, which is that of grace. His conduct was always full of clemency: thus on another occasion He reproved His disciples, who wished to call down fire from heaven upon a city, and He said to them: "You know not of what spirit you are: the Son of man came not to destroy souls, but to save them" (Luke IX, 56). Jesus has two tribunals, the one of mercy, the other of justice; and we can always appeal from His justice to His mercy, which changes severity into sweetness, and penalty into pardon. We have recourse to the Cross and the Altar, which are the two thrones of His clemency. Penance is a tribunal of justice and mercy at the same time; there the pains are light, and the graces abundant; but on the last day justice will resume its rights, and its decrees will be irrevocable. Jesus will then exercise the office of a rigorous Judge, as now He is a Father and a Saviour. O Jesus, be to me a Saviour now and in Thy judgment. Let Thy mercy receive me, and never abandon me.

Fourth Sunday of Lent.

Divine Providence.

I. POINT.

"Jesus said to Philip: Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?" (John VI, 5).

The Providence of God is symbolized by the four animals seen by Ezechiel (Ez. I, 5), which represent

four divine perfections. The eagle represents the knowledge of God, to whose eyes all things are open; He sees all, He penetrates all, and nothing can be hidden from Him. The man represents the goodness of God, by which He wishes to provide for our needs, which are known to Him; He does not forsake His works, nor abandon what He loves. The lion represents His power, "which reaches from end to end mightily" (Wis. VIII, 1). Finally, the ox, laborious and docile, symbolizes wisdom which "disposes all things sweetly". Providence, resting upon these four perfections, extends from the abysses to the highest heavens, controls, rules heaven and earth, things great and small, the exalted and the lowly, those which interest nations and those which concern each individual: even the leaves of the trees, the drops of rain and dew, the very hairs of our head, all are numbered by Providence, says the Son of God (Mat. X, 30); there is nothing which is not submissive to His orders and His power. Who would not abandon himself to this loving Providence, since by His wisdom and knowledge, God sees all and takes care of all for His glory and our salvation. Who will not submit to His power and rely on His goodness? He draws good from our evils, and makes all things serve for the advantage of those who love Him and put their trust in Him.

II. POINT.

Faith in the Providence of Jesus rests on two immovable foundations. The first support is His word, by which He so often invites us to go to Him, and to leave all our solicitude to His care (1 Peter V, 7). "Be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body, what you shall put on. Your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these things" (Mat. VI, 25 and 32). "Come unto Me, all you that are

weary and heavy laden, and I will refresh you" (Mat. XI, 28). "Cast your care upon the Lord, and He will sustain you (Ps. LIV, 23). "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one will open to Me, I will come in" (Apoc. III, 20). The second support of our confidence in Jesus is the certainty of His promises: "He who shall have left house, or father, or mother, or brothers, or sisters, for My name, shall receive a hundred-fold" in this life, "and shall possess life everlasting" (Mat. XIX, 29). How often has Providence shown itself admirable to those who have left all to follow Jesus! We have an example of this in the five thousand men, who followed Him into the desert: drawn by His word and the attractions of His grace, they had left their homes and all their possessions to listen to Him. Jesus takes care of them; He feeds them miraculously with the five loaves (John VI, 11). And how many holy souls have renounced their earthly goods, their relatives, their country, to embrace His Cross! Never was anything wanting to them to sustain life. What marvels does not His Providence accomplish in their favor! But with what food does He nourish our souls in the Blessed Eucharist! In it they are fed with His Divinity; there, man eats the Bread of Angels. O Jesus, "what shall I render to Thee" for all Thy loving care? (Ps. CXV, 12). I place my body, my soul, my life, my eternity in Thy hands, since Thou dost watch over me, and dost re-assure me by Thy promises, the truth of which I already experience for my happiness.

III. POINT.

The people who followed Jesus into the desert, teach us that we should retire from the world, at least in affection, if we wish to be healed of our spiritual diseases, to become afterwards worthy to be instructed

by the Son of God. The bread of truth, says St. Ambrose, is not given to those who remain idle amid vain amusements, but to those who despise the world, in order to attach themselves to Jesus in retreat. The words which the apostles address to Him: Who can satisfy so great a multitude in the midst of this desert (John VI, 5), represent worldlings, who, not living by faith, cannot understand how a soul entertains herself when separated from creatures, to converse only with God. They say: How can any one live in this manner? But the truly faithful who belong to God, and who are animated by His spirit, know with what heavenly and delicious Manna He nourishes those who leave all to possess Him; He makes them taste how sweet it is to listen to Him and follow Him: "I will lead her into solitude, and there I will speak to her heart" (Osee II, 14). For those who live in the dissipation of the world, the word of God, it is true, strikes their ears, and sometimes their minds; but it rarely touches their hearts.

Monday after the Fourth Sunday of Lent.

Holiness of our churches.

I. POINT.

"My house is a house of prayer."

(*Mat. XXI, 13.*)

Here the Church is clearly indicated by a very appropriate designation; since it is the only depository of the faith, it may be called the house of faith, and afterwards the house of prayer, for prayer is the first fruit of faith, and faith forms prayer and renders it efficacious. The Church is, then, the house of faith and prayer; but what is said of it in general, should also be verified in each faithful soul which, individually, is the abode of God and the temple of Jesus Christ. As regards faith, St. Paul says, when speaking of the

true Christian: "The just man liveth by faith" (Rom. I, 17); and, as regards prayer, Jesus Christ teaches us that "it behooveth us always to pray, and never to faint" (Luke XVIII, 1). Therefore the Christian should live by faith and prayer, that is, he should consider not the things of earth, but those of heaven; not things inconstant and transitory, but those which are immutable and eternal. Afterwards he ought to desire and ask of God heavenly goods, expecting all from His liberal hand and His goodness, which faith reveals to him as the source of his happiness.

II. POINT.

"Make not My Father's house a house of traffic" (John II, 16). God is everywhere: by His essence He fills heaven and earth; but He has always chosen certain places, which He has sanctified by His presence and special graces. Thus the mountain upon which Abraham sacrificed, became famous; it was called "The Lord seeth" (Gen. XXII, 14). So Jacob, after the vision of the mysterious ladder, exclaimed: "How terrible is this place! This is no other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven" (Gen. XXVIII, 17). In like manner, God appearing to Moses in the midst of the burning bush, said to him: "The place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exod. III, 5). But what was said in the time of the ancient shadows and figures, may be much more justly applied to our churches, consecrated to the worship and honor of the Divine Majesty: for they are truly the place where the Lord really dwells; they are His house and the gate of heaven, the holy land. The air that is breathed therein is holy, the walls are holy and consecrated; in a word, there is nothing therein which is not holy, and, consequently, only that which is holy should enter. At the

mere sight of these sacred places all profane ideas should disappear, and our thoughts, our demeanor, our actions, and still more our affections ought to become holy. Therefore St. Bernard, when nearing a church, would say to himself: Begone thoughts, cares, temporal anxieties; I will return to you at the proper time; you are forbidden to enter here. Moses, when approaching the burning bush, which was only a figure, laid aside his shoes by the order of God (Exod. III, 5), and showed us by this, how detached we ought to be from all that is earthly, that we may lift ourselves to Him, and be occupied with Him alone.

III. POINT.

The celebration of the tremendous Sacrifice, and the Real Presence of Jesus Christ our Lord, make our temples so august that they ought to be regarded as another Mt. Sinai, where God appears, not in His majesty, but in His humility, not full of terror, but of love. He invites us to approach Him, to receive the pledge of eternal life. It is an empyrean heaven, where the Altar is the throne of God, and the blessed spirits descend in multitudes to assist at the Sacred Mysteries, and with us to adore Jesus Christ our King. Day and night they surround His sanctuary, and never cease to admire His greatness and proclaim His praises. But, if the angels are before the Lord with fear and trembling; if they veil their faces (Is. VI, 2), they who are pure spirits, without stain and without corruption; what ought we not to do, and into what an abyss of humility, of respect and adoration ought we not to be plunged in His presence, we, who are only dust and loaded with innumerable sins? But what should be our love and gratitude, since Jesus descends upon the altar, not for the angels, but for us sinners, for us men, and for our salvation!

As He came down from heaven once to become man, He descends every day to remain as God and Man with us. O inestimable charity, which can never be sufficiently adored, esteemed, acknowledged and loved!

Tuesday after the Fourth Sunday of Lent.

Do the will of Christ.

I. POINT.

“The Jews wondered and said: How doth this man know letters, having never learned?”

(John VII, 15.)

Jesus Christ, our Lord, is admirable in all things, in His divine nature, in His human nature, in all His mysteries, in all the moments of His life, in His actions and His sufferings; therefore the Jews should indeed have admired Him: but, if they had known Him, they would not have wondered that He knew the Scriptures without having learned them. And how should He not have known them, since He Himself dictated them, and inspired them by His Holy Spirit! He gives to men without receiving anything from them; He teaches them without learning from them, because He contains in Himself “all the treasures of the divine wisdom and knowledge” (Col. II, 3). These treasures He received from His Father in two ineffable ways: by emanation, His Father communicating to Him in His eternal birth His essence and His infinite perfections; and by the hypostatic union, which filled His soul with all the divine lights. Let us go, then, to Him to be instructed in our ignorance, to be re-assured in our doubts, to be enlightened in our darkness. O Jesus, “teach me to do Thy will, since Thou art my God” (Ps. CXLII, 10). May the occupation of my life be to study Thee, and to learn from Thee what I ought to do and to avoid. May

my delight in this life and throughout eternity be to contemplate Thee, to adore Thee and admire Thee in Thy greatness and in Thy abasement; for in both Thou art equally an object infinitely admirable, adorable and desirable.

II. POINT.

“If any one will do the will of Him, who hath sent Me, he shall know if My doctrine is of God” (John VII, 17). There is this difference between heavenly things and temporal things, that in the latter knowledge precedes love; and as the light of the sun produces heat, so the understanding excites the will to love that which it presents to it as lovable. But in divine things the love of God produces true knowledge, as fire by its heat produces light. “Taste and see that the Lord is sweet” (Ps. XXXIII, 9). He wishes to taste before seeing, therefore the saints who have loved most, have been most enlightened, as St. John the Evangelist among the apostles, St. Augustine among the Doctors, St. Teresa and so many others. St. Bernard, who was as learned as he was holy, said: I have learned nothing but at the feet of Jesus Christ crucified. The science of salvation is acquired rather by an humble and fervent faith than by lofty speculation; it is learned less by study than by practice, and it consists more in the effects and the faithful use of the graces of God than in the efforts of the mind. O sacred school of Jesus, school of love and good works, school, not of a vain exaltation, but of true compunction; school too readily abandoned, and the only one worthy to be frequented, which speaks not of the motion of the stars, but which leads us to the glory and happiness of heaven!

III. POINT.

“Why seek you to kill Me?” (John VII, 20). Jesus knew the most hidden recesses of hearts, and

needed not to question His enemies. But by this question He wished to make them enter into themselves, that they might perceive the malice of their designs, so full of rage and envy against Him. Jesus had done them only good; He had healed their sick; He had not ceased to instruct them, and show them the way to heaven; but envy hardened them against so many benefits; they sought only to get rid of their Benefactor, because they could not bear the splendor of His holiness and wisdom. In like manner, formerly Cain killed Abel, regarding his innocence as the condemnation of his own malice. O God, where upon earth is he who has not steeped his hands in his brother's blood, blackening his reputation, or tarnishing the splendor of his virtue, which is always unsupportable to pride! These words are then addressed to us as well as to the Jews: "Why seek you to kill Me?"—for envy, which takes away charity, takes from Jesus the life which He possessed in us. O Jesus, come, live, and reign in me. Imprint in me an eternal horror for a passion so dangerous, although so common; for a passion which caused Thy death upon the cross, and which makes Thee suffer it so often in the hearts of Christians. Render mine meek, humble, free from jealousy, and may it know no passion but Thy love.

Wednesday after the Fourth Sunday of Lent.

All in Christ is holy.

I. POINT.

"Jesus saw a man who was born blind."

(John IX, 1.)

He saw him, not by chance, but by an admirable dispensation of His Providence, having chosen and foreseen the way to enlighten him, and to open our eyes

by his cure, in order to teach us that His graces are purely the effect of His goodness. He saw this man, who could not see Him, and as, in the morning, the rays of the sun fall on our eyes before they are opened, so Jesus looks on us, and loves us before we can see and love Him, and even before we enjoy existence; for He has seen us from all eternity, and at every moment of His life: thus He said to Nathanael: "Before Philip called thee, I saw thee under the fig tree" (John I, 48). Let us, then, love Jesus in time, since He loved us in eternity. "Let us love Him, since He first loved us" (1 John IV, 19). Let us look on Him, for He is essential beauty; let us love Him, because He is sovereign goodness. "Jesus saw a man." When Jesus looks, He penetrates hearts, enlightens minds, justifies sinners, heals souls and bodies. He looked on St. Peter, and pierced his heart with sorrow and love; He looked on the fishermen, and made them fishers of men; He looked on a publican, and made him an apostle. He sees the man born blind, and He enlightens him exteriorly and interiorly; He sees him, in order to be seen by him, and to show him mercy. O Lord Jesus, look on me, and have pity on me (Ps. CXVIII, 132).

II. POINT.

"Neither hath this man sinned nor his parents, but that the works of God may be manifested in him" (John IX, 2). The afflictions of this life are sent by God for His glory and for our salvation. On the one hand, His mercy and power shine forth when He delivers us from them, or when He gives us strength and patience to bear them; on the other hand, virtue is thus tried and purified, as gold in the crucible. We profit by temptation in becoming more humble, and in attaching ourselves to God with more confidence, as to the

only source of our happiness. "I must work the works of Him, who sent Me, while it is day" (John IX, 4). By suffering, Jesus fulfilled His heavenly mission, and spread everywhere the knowledge of God and His love; this was His occupation and His care while it was day, that is, during the whole course of His life; therefore, being ready to lay it down, He said to His Father: "I have manifested Thy name to men; I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (John XVII, 4). Let us say, after the example of our Master, that we must do the work of God by suffering, and passing through many tribulations for His glory, and must follow this way, so long as the day of our life shall continue. "Let us do good", says St. Paul, "whilst we have time" (Gal. VI, 10), for the night of death will come, in which no one will be able to labor, or to merit by suffering and loving.

III. POINT.

"Jesus spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and spread the clay upon his eyes" (John IX, 6). We are all children of Adam, all born blind, and only Jesus can restore our sight. The pride of the first man blinded us all; only the humility of the second can give us light. Jesus wishes to repair man with the same clay from which He formed him. The spittle mixed with the clay symbolizes the uncreated Wisdom, proceeding from the understanding of the Father, who united Himself to our dust by the Incarnation. He said: "I am a worm, and no man" (Ps. XXI, 7). Thus He made of His humiliations a salutary remedy to heal our pride; and by His abasement He opened our eyes, that we might know ourselves, know Him, and attach ourselves to Him, in order to live and triumph with Him in His glory. Jesus wished also to show us by this

action, that there is nothing in Him that is not living and life-giving, holy and sanctifying, and that all that comes from Him, even His spittle, is salutary and powerful to restore health to bodies and souls. O Jesus, by the virtue of Thy sacred Flesh, purify my flesh; apply to the pride of my spirit the clay of Thy humility and opprobrium; deliver me, who am born blind, from that most fatal blindness, the blindness of sin; enlighten me, O Thou, "who art the true Light, and who enlightenest every man coming into this world" (John I, 9).

Thursday after the Fourth Sunday of Lent.

The death of the soul deserves our tears.

I. POINT.

"Jesus was moved with compassion."

(Luke VII, 13.)

Jesus, taking our mortal flesh, clothed Himself with "the bowels of mercy" (Luke I, 78). In becoming man, He entered into our sentiments. Therefore, seeing a desolate widow, He was touched with compassion, as He afterwards wept over Jerusalem, when, about to enter it, He represented to Himself the approaching ruin, with which this unhappy city was threatened; and thus He still compassionates our afflictions, our misfortunes, and the persecutions that we suffer, His goodness always taking care to alleviate them by secret consolations. St. Paul says: "Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who comforts us" and strengthens us in our afflictions, that through Him we may be enabled to console those who suffer with us (2 Cor. 1, 4). Happy meeting to-day of an afflicted mother with the Sovereign Comforter; Jesus restores to her what she had lost, and reveals to us His clemency and mercy. O my Saviour, joy of those who weep in

this world! If Thou art so good to us sinners, still pilgrims and exiles for our iniquities in this land of the dying, what an ocean of delights and happiness Thou dost prepare in the land of the living for those who love Thee!

II. POINT.

The loving sentiments of Jesus for Jerusalem and the widow of Naim represent to us His compassion for the whole human race, fallen into the bondage of sin, and for each soul dead to grace; for, from the moment of His Incarnation, He was moved with mercy towards all and towards each individual; but as the soul is more precious than the body, and as eternity is better than time, so He was moved with greater sorrow for the death of the soul, which is the loss of God by sin, since, according to St. Augustine, the soul lives only by its union with God, as the body lives by its union with its soul. After such an example of the Saviour, shall we pretend that we have any remnant of piety, if, at the sight of death, we weep over the body, from which the soul has gone forth, whilst at the sight of sin, we do not weep over a soul, from which God has withdrawn. Yet, this last misfortune deserves to be bewailed with tears of blood. For what a loss to be without grace, without charity, without God! Hence God has made man alone capable of weeping, because he alone is capable of committing sin, and tears ought to be shed only for sin. O Jesus, my guilty soul has, then, been the cause of Thy sufferings and Thy anguish! Give me a heart which will correspond to the bitter sorrow of Thine, and tears of true repentance, to mingle them with those which Thy love made Thee shed for my sins.

III. POINT.

“Weep not” (Luke VII, 13). Corporal death is not worth the pain of shedding tears. We are born

subject to death; it is a common tribute which our nature owes to the divine justice, since it is the penalty and punishment of sin (Rom. VI, 21), from which no one is exempt. But Jesus, although holy and sinless, in submitting to this law, took away the sting of death, making it a passage to a life of happiness, the end of our journey and our labors, a sword of division which separates us from the world, and delivers us from the yoke of sin, of the flesh, and from ourselves, to procure for us an entrance into heaven, and to unite us inseparably to God. Moreover, what is there lamentable in corporal death, since Jesus Christ chose to submit to it? The death which He endured for our iniquities, sweetens ours. What can we fear in dying? Jesus comes Himself, at this last hour, to give us the pledge of immortality; He opens the way by His Cross; He gives Himself to us as Viaticum, to nourish and strengthen our soul in this perilous passage from time to eternity. O consolations worthy of the goodness of God, and which should certainly re-assure us in our terrors! O Jesus, may my death be sanctified by the merits of Thine, for then it will be happy, then it will fulfil all my desires.

Friday after the Fourth Sunday of Lent.

The love of Jesus Christ.

I. POINT.

“Jesus loved Martha, and her sister Mary, and Lazarus.”
(John XI, 5.)

Jesus living on earth, honored some saints with His familiar intercourse and His special love. Lazarus and his two sisters, Martha and Mary, were of this number. Happy are they who saw Thee, O Lord, who were favored with Thy friendship, “who enjoyed Thy presence”

(3 Kings X, 8), and “who spoke to Thee face to face, as a man is wont to speak to his friend” (Exod. XXXIII, 11). They receive a grace equal, and even superior, to that which God formerly bestowed on Moses. The sisters of Lazarus trusting in the affection of Jesus, sent to Him this message: “Lord, he whom Thou lovest, is sick” (John XI, 3); a short prayer, indeed, but fervent, humble, and full of confidence! They simply make known the state and the need of their brother, leaving the rest to the goodness of Jesus, who cannot be indifferent to any one whom He loves. If we have not the happiness to see Jesus conversing with us here below, we are assured of His love by countless other benefits. Let us, then, conjure Him by this sacred name of love, above all that love which makes Him the companion of our pilgrimage, for if He does not lodge in our house as in that of the two sisters of Bethany, does He not do even more, dwelling not only in our temples, where we find Him at every hour, but in ourselves, and in our very heart by holy Communion? Let us, then, offer to Him the heart He loves. Behold, Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick; raise him up in his falls, strengthen him, when he is weak, heal him, when he is sick; seek him, whom Thou lovest, that he may love Thee, that he may seek Thee, that he may find Thee, and that, having found Thee, he may never lose Thee.

II. POINT.

“Jesus wept” (John XI, 35). Jesus excited the emotions of His compassion, of His love, or His anger, according to His good pleasure and the rules of His wisdom; He gave them limits which they did not pass, as they were perfectly submissive to Him. “He groaned and wept” (John XI, 33 and 35), seeing the extreme misery to which we are reduced by sin; for He saw in

the dead man, who was presented to Him, an image of the sinner, who has lost the life of grace, who has precipitated himself into the darkness and gloom of spiritual death, who is buried and laid in the ground by his attachment to earth; there He discovers this sinner, whose corrupt soul exhales, by bad example, an odor of death, which poisons and kills. Jesus saw in this dead man all those whose hypocrisy serves as a veil for their impiety. They are whited sepulchres, adorned without, but full of corruption within (Mat. XXIII, 27), and their hearts, hard as stone, are insensible to their salvation. Over all these sinners Jesus Christ weeps; He sheds tears, seeing that they despise the glory and the will of His Father, that they insult His goodness, and that they drag down to everlasting perdition souls whom He has redeemed with His own blood. But, O Jesus, will not Thy tears, so precious and so efficacious, soften the hard insensibility of our hearts? O Thou who, with a powerful voice, didst call Lazarus from the sepulchre and restore him to the light of day, enlighten sinners, render them docile to Thy voice, for the dead hear the voice of the Son of man: they who hear it, live (John V, 25), and he who believes in Thee, though he were dead, shall live, because Thou art the resurrection as Thou art the life (John XI, 25).

III. POINT.

“Behold how He loved him” (John XI, 36. If the Jews, seeing Jesus weep over Lazarus, said among themselves: “Behold how He loved him”, what would they have said and thought if, enlightened by the light of faith which surrounds us, they had recognized in Jesus Him who came down from heaven to earth, to make man ascend from earth to heaven, who took the form of a slave, and called Himself the Son of man, to

redeem man and make him the child of God: "Behold how He loved him". God was made flesh to make man a spiritual creature, and even a god. I have said: "You are all gods, and children of the Most High" (Ps. LXXXI, 6). Jesus became poor to enrich us; He abased Himself to exalt us, He plunged Himself in our miseries to deliver us. Behold how He has loved us! He made a salutary bath, not only of His tears, but of His precious blood, to wash away our stains, and to clothe us with the robe of innocence; He endured excessive sufferings to procure for us the delights of His kingdom, and to inebriate us with its holy pleasures; He was loaded with contempt to merit glory for us, and to give us a right to say: "I shall be satiated when Thy glory shall appear" (Ps. XVI, 15); finally, by a last effort of His love, He died "with the wicked" (Is. LIII, 12), to procure for us eternal life and to crown us with the just. Behold how greatly He has loved us. O Jesus, what can I do to correspond to such love? Why have I not a thousand lives to sacrifice them, and all the hearts of men to love Thee.

Saturday after the Fourth Sunday of Lent.

Christ, the light of the world.

I. POINT.

"I am the light of the world."

(John VIII, 12.)

The soul of Jesus was filled with graces, His will with virtues, His mind with light and truth (John I, 14). The holy humanity, the Sacred Ark of the New Covenant, infinitely more precious than the Old, contains the heavenly manna of all kinds of graces, of light and truth; there are found the fruits and flowers of all the virtues; from this varied fulness we have all received. As the fulness of graces, Jesus is called the "Fountain

of life" (Ps. XXXV, 10), from which He invites us to draw, saying: "Come unto Me, all ye who thirst", come to the waters, come, and although you have not wherewith to pay (Is. LV, 1), come and drink in the joy of your heart. As the fulness of light, He is called the Sun of Justice (Mal. IV, 2); and in this character He does not cease to enlighten our minds and warm our hearts with His holy love; and who can hide himself from His divine heat? (Ps. XVIII, 7). Finally, He is "the Lord of virtues" (Ps. XXIII, 10); He causes them to spring into life, He sustains them and perfects them in us. O Jesus, "Sun of Justice", source of grace, of light and all virtues, without whom we have nothing, give us of Thy abundance, pour upon us of Thy fulness.

II. POINT.

"He that followeth Me, walketh not in darkness" (John VIII, 12). The wisdom of the world is folly before God, says St. Paul (1 Cor. I, 27), and all the light of the world is only a gloomy night, in which there is always danger of going astray and falling, because of the continual occasions of sin. Therefore, we need a sure and faithful guide; we need the true light to lead us: whoever follows it, walks not in darkness. We see Jesus as our way, by believing in Him; we follow Him as the truth, by obeying Him; finally, we possess Him as the life, by loving Him. O Jesus, give me faith, which is, according to Thy apostle, a lamp shining in the midst of clouds and obscurity (2 Peter I, 19), that I may walk in the way of Thy commandments; give me a lively faith, animated by charity, that I may see Thee and follow Thee as the truth, which enlightens me, and guides me through the dangerous paths of this world, that I may attain to Thee, who art my true life, and that I may possess Thee in time and eternity.

III. POINT.

“He that followeth Me, walketh not in darkness; but he shall have the light of life” (John VIII, 12). To follow Jesus, is to imitate His virtues, to conform our conduct to His, to walk by the narrow way which He has smoothed for us, to go after Him, to renounce self, to “put off the old man and put on the new” (Col. III, 9), who is no other than Himself. He who follows Him in this way, walks securely, and will not fail to arrive with Jesus at the happy goal which is to terminate his course, and put an end to his labors. The world is vain and deceitful, it has only false lights, which lead us to the precipice and to death; but Jesus, in His examples and His words, is a certain light which shines always and is never extinguished; it guides us to the haven, and, as it is the light of life, it enables us to enter into the land of the living, there to enjoy the light of glory forever. O Jesus, “after the darkness I hope for the light” (Job XVII, 12). May I follow Thee wherever Thou shalt go, may I follow Thee in Thy labors, to Calvary, to the Cross, to death; that I may enter with Thee into life and repose.

Passion Sunday.

Christ suffers for all men.

I. POINT.

“Which of you shall convict Me of sin?”

(John VIII, 46.)

We needed a High-priest, who could speak in this manner. “For it was fitting that we should have such a high-priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens” (Heb. VII, 26). Jesus is holy and without spot, because He never sinned, “and no falsehood was found in His mouth”,

because He cannot sin, and, almighty as He is for good, He is entirely incapable of evil. It was necessary that Jesus should be without sin, in order to be the propitiation for sin (1 John II, 2), and the "sacrifice holy, pleasing unto God" (Rom. XII, 1), and worthy of Him; it was necessary that He should be impeccable, in order to be the Sovereign Pontiff, who, by His sacrifice, should reconcile us with His Father; for He is, at the same time, the Priest and the Victim, and He is not only innocent and cannot be convicted of sin, but He is holy and the Holy of holies, as the true and only Son of God; and with the Father and the Holy Ghost, the seraphim continually proclaim Him thrice holy (Is. VI, 3). To Him alone, then, it belongs to sanctify sinners and to make them just. O Jesus, true "Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world" (John I, 29), take them all from our hearts forever, and grant that, honoring Thy greatness and holiness, we may become worthy to participate in them, by a blessed inability to offend Thee. Grant that with the chaste Joseph, when tempted to sin, we may answer: "We can not"; and how could it be possible for us to sin against the Lord! (Gen. XXXIX. 9).

II. POINT.

"Who among you shall convict Me of sin?" All creatures bear witness to the innocence of Jesus in His passion: the angels in His agony, Judas by the confession of his crime. "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood" (Mat. XXVII, 4); Pilate in saying: "I am innocent of the blood of this just man" (Mat. XXVII, 24); Pilate's wife, when she sent word to him: "Have nothing to do with that just man" (Mat. XXVII, 19); the thief, the centurion and many others; even inanimate creatures attested His holiness: the sun was

darkened, the earth trembled, the sepulchres were opened, hell was despoiled and compelled to give up its captives, the veil of the ancient tabernacle was rent. Yet, Jesus innocent, just and holy, was condemned and judged by all as worthy of death, and shamefully crucified as the most guilty criminal. O holiness of Jesus, acknowledged by all, and condemned by all! But, O good Jesus, if Thou art regarded as the security or bail for the sins of others which Thou didst bear on the Cross, for "the Lord laid upon Him the iniquities of us all" (Is. LIII, 6), who will not accuse Thee of sin! I have loaded Thee with mine, and there is no one who cannot convict Thy love of having borne and expiated his evil deeds. We adore Thee in this profound humiliation, under the burden of the sins of the whole world, of all those countless sins which were a heavy weight upon Thy sacred head. May they be effaced, O Lord. "For if, in former times, the blood of bulls purified" according to the flesh, "how much more ought Thy precious Blood to purify our consciences from dead works?" (Heb. IX, 13). This Blood which Thou didst shed when offering Thyself, by the Holy Ghost, as a pure and immaculate victim, when Thou didst die, not as a sinner, but as the Saviour of sinners, this Blood which Thou dost give us at the altar, O Lord, demands not vengeance, but implores grace and mercy for us who have shed it. May this Blood purify and keep our souls unto life everlasting!

III. POINT.

"They took stones to cast at Him" (John VIII, 59). The Church, which to-day raises the standard of the Cross, which shows it to her children, and destines and consecrates this season to honor the Passion of the Saviour, places before our eyes a kind of passion which

preceded that of Calvary, and which, although not so violent, nevertheless exercised the patience of Jesus: we mean the continual persecutions which He underwent on the part of the Jews; their unjust jealousy did not permit them to draw favorable conclusions from the depth of His doctrine and the multitude of His miracles, but only to charge Him with acting by the power of Beelzebub. They seek only to lay snares for Him, "to entangle Him in His speech", to condemn His holiest and most brilliant actions. Sometimes they take stones to cast at Him, sometimes they try to throw Him over the precipice (Luke I, 16), or to seize His person; but His meekness is not ruffled by their evil designs, the malice of which is known to Him, nor by their bad treatment, or the atrocious insults which they offer Him. He answers by an humble silence, or with divine meekness, and by His example He instructs and strengthens His servants. He chose to be called a seducer, says St. Augustine, for the consolation of His followers, when they find themselves exposed to similar calumnies. He said to them: "Wonder not if the world hate you (1 John III, 13), since it hated Me before it hated you"; "the servant is not greater than his Master" (John XIII, 16). If He, who is holy and irreproachable, was thus treated, shall we, criminals and sinners as we are, dare to complain of the malice of men against us?

Monday after Passion Sunday.

Danger of delay in seeking Jesus Christ.

I. POINT.

*"You shall seek Me, and you shall not find Me."
(John VII, 34.)*

The Jews did not receive the Messiah, who was sent to them; and by a just judgment of God, they desire

Him, they wait for Him, they still seek Him, and they do not find Him. How greatly should we fear, lest we should be stricken with a similar blindness, that Jesus should be in the midst of us, and that we should not perceive Him, or not be conscious of His divine presence. Those who abuse His graces, who do not profit by the occasions and means of salvation which are offered to them, who do not correspond to the will of God in their regard, shall seek Jesus, and, by an awful and equitable judgment, they shall not find Him. The sinner is punished by this terrible chastisement, says St. Augustine, that, having forgotten God during life, he forgets Him still and forgets himself at the hour of death. Thus the foolish virgins, having fallen asleep, the door was closed upon them, and when they knocked, crying: "Lord, open to us", He answered them: "I know you not" (Mat. XXV, 11). How dangerous it is not to will, when we can! For, by a frightful exchange, when we would wish, we shall not be able. Therefore, Jesus said: "Where I am, you cannot come" (John VII, 34). He entered into His glory by the Cross and by His death; by the same way we must reach the same end; we can do so by the grace that is given to us: but if we do not will it efficaciously now, soon we shall not be able. "Where I am", that is, in the glory of My Father, "you cannot come", because you will not enter into the way of suffering and death to yourselves.

II. POINT.

"If any one thirst, let him come to Me, and drink" (John VII, 37). Jesus is "the Fountain of life" (Ps. XXXV, 10). The waters which flow from this fountain are the divine graces; He offers them to all, and invites us to go to Him; He waits for us, He looks upon us, He loves us, He prepares His favors for us. "If any

one thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink." He is a fruitful source, which always flows and is never exhausted. His grace is precious and worthy to be esteemed and sought for; but it is given without measure in His august Sacrament; there Jesus Himself is a heavenly food, and a spiritual beverage producing immortality. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled" (Mat. V, 6). "If any one thirst, let him come to Me, and drink": we are especially invited in this holy season. O Jesus, "as the thirsty hart panteth for the fountains of water, so my soul panteth for Thee; it thirsteth for Thee, O strong and living God! When shall I come and appear before the face of God? (Ps. XLI, 3). When shall I possess Thee, O Lord? My heart thirsts for Thee, it sighs for Thee alone.

III. POINT.

"The chief priests sent soldiers to apprehend Jesus" (John VII, 32). Jesus, by the charm of His holy words, captivates and changes the hearts of those who came to seize Him. When His hour has not come, His enemies are powerless; but when the time appointed by His Father had arrived, He delivered Himself into their hands, All the events of the life of Jesus were foreseen and fixed by the Eternal Wisdom, and He never sought to retard or advance them: an example which teaches us to regulate our conduct according to the designs of God. The primitive Church said to God: "They assembled to do what Thy hand and Thy counsel decreed to be done" (Acts IV, 28), for God, from eternity, foreseeing the fall of man, willed to derive from it a just satisfaction; and as only His Son could do this and glorify the Divine Majesty worthily, God decreed in His eternal council the labors, the Passion and the

death of Jesus to redeem men, and He resolved not to accomplish this work at a lower price, in order that the divine justice might be fully satisfied; that our redemption might be abundant (Ps. CXXIX, 7); that we might have wherewith to pay all our debts, and that the multitude of the sufferings and sorrows of our Saviour might correspond to the multitude of our sins. O great God, "rich in Thy mercy" (Eph. II, 4), how much I have cost Thee! May I acknowledge Thy labors by my love, and Thy love by a lively sorrow for having offended Thee.

Tuesday after Passion Sunday.

Christ's agony in the garden.

I. POINT.

The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Church places this title at the head of the narrative of the Saviour's sufferings. The most surprising miracles, even the creation of a new world, would not be so difficult to conceive, nor so foreign to the Son of God, as His sufferings; the former were the proper effects of His almighty power, for they were accomplished by His mere order or desire. But His Passion, the sufferings of Him who is impassible, the death of the immortal God, this is incomprehensible. "O ye heavens, be astonished at this!" (Jer. II, 12). *The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ!* It is not the passion of a servant, nor the torture of a slave, but of the Lord of the whole world, our Sovereign, our Master and our King. O what a prodigy! Jesus suffers by us and for us, and He gives us the fruit and the merit of His sufferings. The Creator suffers for His creatures, the Innocent One for sinners, the Lord for His slaves and by their hands; for they are freed by the bonds with

which they bind Him, delivered from eternal despair by the anguish with which they pierce His heart, restored to life by the death which they inflict on Him, sanctified by the precious Blood which they caused to flow so copiously. He suffers, then, not as a sinner, but as Jesus and the Saviour; as the Christ, as the Anointed and the Sanctified by the Divinity itself: as such, He saves and redeems us. All the labors of men and angels in time and eternity, the destruction or the sacrifice of their being, or their lives, without the merits of Jesus, could not efface a single sin, or merit a single degree of grace. Only Jesus could acquire for us all these treasures. O infinite value of grace! O detestable enormity of sin, which could not be expiated and repaired by all created nature! How dare we commit it so readily! O God, who dost suffer and die, the Just One for the wicked, the Innocent One for the guilty, imprint in my soul an eternal horror of sin, and a lively gratitude for Thy excessive charity.

II. POINT.

“Jesus began to be sorrowful and to grow sad” (Mat. XXVI, 37). As sin has its root in the heart of man, Jesus wished to expiate it by the sorrows and the anguish of His own heart; and because sin is always accompanied by an interior pleasure, Jesus wished to be plunged interiorly into bitterness, and penetrated with a mortal sadness, as He Himself expresses it: “My soul is sorrowful even unto death” (Mat. XXVI, 38). If we ask Him, why He groans and is sad, He will answer that it is our sins that grieve Him, and penetrate Him with sorrow. The Wise Man says: Nothing can make a just man sad (Prov. XII, 21). Jesus is holiness itself; the innocence and integrity of His life ought to render His soul inaccessible to sadness; but He regards Himself as a public penitent, who must bear all the penalty

of our sins, because He wishes to make full satisfaction for them. He sees His Father offended, and for this He conceives a sorrow which He wishes to be equal to the extreme indignity, the iniquity and the malice of the offence. He suffers as much as He loves; and as He loves us with an infinite love, and as He loves His Father with a love which has no limits, we must conclude that His affliction, His suffering and His sadness are beyond measure. O Jesus, the joy of the angels, and the supreme beatitude of the saints, must I see Thee plunged in an ocean of bitterness for my sins, and shall I still commit them with pleasure, and look upon them unmoved and shamefully indifferent? O my Saviour, pierce my heart with the sorrow which overwhelms Thine, and may I never be consoled for having been constantly the cause of Thy anguish. My love for Thee is too weak to be a measure for my sorrow, but may it be measured, O Lord, by the love which Thou hast for me.

III. POINT.

“Jesus began to fear and to be heavy” (Mark XIV, 33). O surprising prodigy! The Almighty, whom nothing can harm, is seized with terror. If fear arises from an evil which we would wish to avoid, but can not, what can He apprehend, to whose power everything is submissive? His fear, then, not being an effect of weakness, proceeds from His love. He fears, because He has taken the place of sinners, and, *sin only excepted*, He wishes to feel all their pains and to be clothed with all their miseries; He fears, in order to console us in our fears, and to sanctify them. He fears, in order to quiet our fears; He trembles, in order to render His disciples intrepid. O my Saviour, the martyrs run to death as to a triumph, and Thou dost go to it trembling, Thou who art the Chief of martyrs. “The just man is

bold as a lion", he is fearless (Prov. XXVIII, 1); and Thou, O Lord, who, by Thy justice, dost justify and form all the just, who are just only through Thee, Thou art prostrated with dread. Thy soldiers, armed with Thy weapons, go joyfully to the combat, and labor with death in sight, in the hope of receiving the crown, and Thou, to whom victory belongs, and who art sure of it, dost turn pale with terror! O my God, it is because Thou hast taken all their weakness in order to communicate to them all Thy strength. Thy fear and timidity come from them; their courage and security come from Thee. Who could be astonished, O Lord, to see Thee brave death with constancy, Thou who hast power to lay down Thy life and to take it up again at Thy pleasure? (John X, 18). But it was worthy of Thee to draw strength from Thy weakness, courage from Thy fear, and the peace of Thy children from the peace of Thy Sacred Heart. O incomparable Physician! Thou hast taken the voice and the groaning of the sick. O inestimable charity! O unparalleled goodness! Since Thou hast clothed Thyself with my infirmities, "Lord, heal me"; strengthen me and cure me by Thy power.

Wednesday after Passion Sunday.

Christ's prayer in the agony.

I. POINT.

"Jesus was withdrawn away from them a stone's cast, and kneeling down, He prayed."

(Luke XXII, 41.)

All that Jesus does should claim our attention, since He is the model of our actions. It is chiefly in His sufferings in the Garden of Olives and upon Calvary, that these words are said to us: Behold, and do according to the pattern that has been given to you upon the mountain (Exod. XXV, 40). Jesus in the violence of

His sorrow has recourse to prayer, thus teaching us that it is the only remedy for all our miseries. Since we had been stripped by sin of all the goods that we had received from the bountiful hand of the Creator, He wished to leave us this resource in our trials, that we might venture to have recourse to Him by prayer. "He listens", says the royal prophet, "to the groaning of the poor" (Ps. LXVIII, 34). Jesus withdraws from His disciples, to show us that prayer should be made apart, in silence and separated from creatures. "Wait ye here and watch" (Mark XIV, 34). Prayer is a gift of God and the effect of His grace, we must ask for it, and wait for it: "Wait for the Lord, and let your heart take courage" (Ps. XXVI, 14). Wait with patience in dryness and aridity, He will come and will not delay (Habac. II, 3), for it is He who commands you to wait: but watch, with fidelity, in order to receive Him, when He shall come, for "Blessed is that servant, whom, when the Master cometh, He shall find watching" (Luke XII, 43). And Wisdom warns us, that "they, that in the early morning watch for Him, shall find Him" (Prov. VIII, 17). Vigilance is necessary, then, to receive and co-operate with the graces of God in prayer. Jesus falls on His knees, and prostrates Himself with His face to the ground. Let us learn from a God suppliant and humbled, how we ought to pray. With what respect He presents Himself to His Father! He falls on His face, as formerly Abraham did, saying to God: "I will speak to my Lord, although I am but dust and ashes" (Gen. XVIII, 27); or as the royal prophet says: "My soul hath cleaved to the pavement; quicken Thou me, according to Thy word" (Ps. CXVIII, 25). O abasement of Jesus, which we ought to honor by the most profound humiliations of our bodies and souls, even to the lowest depths of nothing-

ness! O adorable face of Jesus, which "the angels desire to look upon" (1 Pet. I, 12); face pressed to the ground, covered with a bloody sweat! O holy Father, look upon the face of Jesus Christ (Ps. LXXXIII, 10), and in His name pardon sinners for whom He prays to Thee.

II. POINT.

"Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me" (Mat. XXVI, 39). Jesus speaks as we do, to teach us to speak as He does. He knows that His Father is not ignorant of the sentiments of His heart, that He reads in it the just and natural repugnance He feels to die for ungrateful wretches, to see these criminals accomplishing upon His sacred person the most enormous and execrable of all crimes, to see Himself the object of their blasphemy, their sacrilegious mockery, insults and barbarous cruelty; therefore, He addresses Himself to His Father, He asks, if it be possible, to be delivered from this chalice, from the hour of the power of darkness; but He immediately adds: "Not My will, but Thine be done" (Luke XXII, 42). A human inclination, just and reasonable, which He chooses to permit; a firmness worthy of a God, submission, resignation, worthy of a Man-God, which instruct us, merit graces for us, and give us strength to imitate Him! Let us ask with Jesus and from Himself the favors we desire, removal of the evils we fear, provided that we add as He did: Not my will, but Thine be done! Let us persevere in prayer with Jesus, and remain firm and faithful in the resignation of our own will. Let us accept the chalice which He presents to us, notwithstanding the rebellion of nature: it can never be so bitter as His; and even if He should give us a share in His own, what an honor to be treated as He was, and what sweetness, what consolation shall we not

experience! But if temptation seems to prevail over the inspirations of grace, let us pray more ardently, let us prolong our prayer, let us not terminate it, until we have overcome our enemies, that is, our own passions, our repugnances; for the fruit of the most sublime and excellent prayer is to leave self and self-love, in order to unite our will to that of God Himself, or rather to lose ours happily in His.

III. POINT.

“Being in an agony, He prayed the longer, and His sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground” (Luke XXII, 43). The agony of Jesus is a profound abyss of humiliation, in which His soul was plunged for all the sins of the world, the heavy burden and confusion of which He bore before His Father, the divine justice weighing upon Him. What Jesus suffers in this cruel agony, is not the invention of the hand of man, but that of His Father, who said: I struck Him for the sins of My people (Is. LIII, 4). The prophet Isaias says: “Truly, He hath borne our infirmities and suffered our pains; we have seen Him as a leper smitten by God and humbled; yet He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins” (Is. LIII, 5). He was reduced to agony by the keen suffering which they caused Him; He saw their enormity and innumerable multitude, He saw the ingratitude of men, and how few would profit by His Blood, shed for them, by His sufferings and death. He felt all these horrors, and endured in anticipation, in His spirit, all that He was to endure in His body and in His honor. Finally, let us endeavor to penetrate another impenetrable abyss, which is that of His love: a love so violent that, without waiting for the cruelty of the executioners, it made Him shed streams of blood, with which the earth was dyed. His love for our souls excited a combat in His heart,

which drew the blood from His veins; He resolved, He determined to deliver Himself to death, and to all the cruel and ignominious circumstances which were to accompany it; He accepted the chalice, He offered Himself to His Father to suffer all, He immolated Himself and poured forth His Blood through the effort of His love, before shedding it on Calvary. O Jesus, wilt Thou suffer alone, wilt Thou love alone, wilt Thou combat alone, even unto blood? Grant, I conjure Thee by this same adorable Blood, that I may suffer, that I may combat with Thee, that I may immolate and sacrifice myself to Thee and for Thee, that I may be all burning and consumed in the flames of Thy holy love!

Thursday after Passion Sunday.

Power of prayer.

I. POINT.

"Arise, let us go hence; he is at hand who is to betray Me." (Mat. XXVI, 46.)

The first step of Jesus in executing the sentence pronounced by His Father, and in His acceptance of it! A marvellous effect of prayer! What useful lessons it contains! Jesus before His prayer appeared weak and timid; at the conclusion He was strong and courageous; before it He feared death and shrank from it; now He seeks it. See, how He advances the first to the combat; He waits not for His enemies, He goes to meet them. "Whom seek ye?" (John XVIII, 4), He asks. His charity urges Him, He has just given Himself to His friends at the Last Supper, strengthening and nourishing them with His sacred Flesh in the Divine Eucharist. Now He gives Himself to His enemies, to suffer death for those who are about to inflict it on Him. "They answered: Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said to them: I am He" (John XVIII, 5). To Him alone it belongs,

as true God, to pronounce these words: "I am who am" (Exod. III, 14); He is, in fact, as Man-God, the messenger from His Father, and Mediator between Him and us: "He who is, hath sent Me to you." At these words: "I am He", they fell to the ground (John XVIII, 6). "I am He", a powerful word of Jesus, who drew heaven and earth from the abyss of nothing, and who could as easily reduce His enemies to nothing, as throw them to the ground. "I am He"; Jesus is with the Father and the Holy Ghost subsisting by Himself, "and all nations are before Him as a drop of a bucket, as a light grain of a balance" (Is. XL, 15). O Jesus, I acknowledge Thy supreme being: Thou art He, who is, and I am he, who is not; I adore Thee in Thy greatness and Thy absolute power over all created beings. To-day, O Lord, Thou dost use this power only to satisfy Thy goodness; it is true, Thou dost cast Thine enemies to Thy feet; but it is only to enlighten them, and to raise them up by a new grace which Thou dost offer to them in a last effort of Thy mercy. May I not be like them, insensible to Thy goodness! May I feel its effects by a faithful correspondence, and may I praise and bless Thee forever!

II. POINT.

"Judas approached Jesus, saying to Him: Hail, Master; and he kissed Him. Jesus said to him: Friend, whereto art thou come?" (Mat. XXVI, 50); "betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" (Luke XXII, 48). How greatly should we fear to weary God, to abuse His graces, and thus merit to be abandoned by Him! The Wise Man says: No one can correct him who has drawn upon himself the contempt of God (Eccles. VII, 14). The hardened heart of Judas could not be moved, either by the warning at the Last Supper, or by the gift which

Jesus made to him of His Sacred Body, or by His look, as loving as it was powerful, or by the name of friend, or by the kiss which He does not refuse to the traitor, or by the gentle reproach by which He enlightens him and shows him his sin. O Jesus, "cast me not away from Thy face, and take not Thy holy spirit from me" (Ps. L, 13). Lucifer fell from heaven; Adam was driven from paradise; Judas sold his God, betrayed his Master and was deprived of the apostleship. Who will dare to live in security? Who will not tremble? Who will not work out his salvation with fear? Judas, brought up in the school of Eternal Wisdom, called by Jesus, instructed by Him, loaded with His benefits, hearing every day the words of life, which fell from His lips, which converted the hardest hearts and compelled them to exclaim: "Never did man speak like this man" (John VII, 46). Judas, who had constantly before his eyes the perfect Model of all the virtues, nevertheless, fell into the most shameful, the most unworthy and abominable of all crimes. He committed the blackest and basest perfidy: a terrible example for a Christian, for a soul consecrated to God, when she neglects the love and fidelity which she owes to Him! The Fathers say, Judas did not suddenly reach this crowning point of iniquity, to sell his soul in selling his God for thirty pieces of silver: avarice had already taken possession of his heart; he took no care to guard against this dangerous passion. To what extremes did it not lead him! How greatly we should distrust our passions! With what vigilance must we combat them! For if the mighty cedars are shaken and fall, what will become of the weak reeds? O Jesus, who alone canst sustain my weakness, guard Thyself from me, or rather "protect me under the shadow of Thy wings", lest I betray Thee (Ps. XVI, 8). Thou alone art my strength; all my

good is to attach myself to Thee, and to place all my hope in Thee (Ps. LXXII, 28).

III. POINT.

“This is your hour and the power of darkness” (Luke XXII, 53). Jesus by these words abandons Himself to the fury of His enemies and of hell itself. Formerly God delivered Job into the hands of Satan, with this reserve, that he should not touch his life (Job II, 6); but Jesus is abandoned by God, His Father, and He delivers Himself to the rage of the devils and the death of the Cross; “He was offered, because it was His own will” (Is. LIII, 7). He suffered by His will, and not through fear; He was taken and bound by the chains of His love, more than by the bonds of the Jews; and He declared this plainly, when He said: “I was with you daily in the temple, and you laid no hands on Me; but this is your hour” (Luke XXII, 53). In the same sense He said to the disciple, who wished to defend Him: “Put up thy sword into the scabbard; shall I not drink the chalice which My Father hath given Me?” (John XVIII, 11); “and how, then, shall the Scriptures be fulfilled?” (Mat. XXVI, 54). Jesus offered Himself not only freely, but with an ardent desire to suffer and die, to obey God His Father, to fulfil the prophecies, and to save the world. “If you seek Me,” He added, “let these go their way” (John XVIII, 8). A word of life and death, of death for Jesus, of life and love for us. He forbids them to touch His disciples, and, while He takes such tender care of them, He abandons Himself without resistance to the power of sinners. At that moment they laid hands on Him, “they took Jesus and bound Him” (John XVIII, 12). O my God, if formerly, when Heli heard that the Ark was taken, he fell backward and died, ought not

we at the word and the thought of Jesus taken, bound and a prisoner, ought not we to fall into an abyss of sorrow and astonishment, so much the greater as it is we who have woven these fatal bonds by our iniquities; for our sins weigh upon Him more heavily than His chains. O Lord, grant that we may weep over our sins all the days of our life! Thou dost choose to be bound, in order to bind the hands of Thy avenging justice, ready to fall upon us; to free us by Thy captivity from that of the devil. O too great goodness! May Thy bonds, O Lord, forever break those of our sins and of our bad habits; by the power of these same bonds, by the indissoluble bonds of a perfect charity, by the victorious chains of Thy holy love, may I become Thy captive, Thy slave for time and eternity!

Friday after Passion Sunday.

Mary at the foot of the cross.

I. POINT.

“The Mother of Jesus stood at the foot of the Cross.”
(*John XIX, 25.*)

Mary was present at the sad spectacle of the bloody sacrifice of her Son; with her own eyes she saw Him covered with wounds, spittle, blood and bruises; she saw Him nailed and suspended to a gibbet, between two thieves; she heard with her own ears the blasphemies, the mockery and the insults, with which His enemies ridiculed His sorrows. The sufferings of her beloved Son crucified the soul of His chaste Mother; then was the prophecy of Simeon accomplished: “The sword of sorrow shall pierce Thy soul” (Luke II, 35). The same stroke which put Jesus to death, mortally wounded the heart of Mary; her heart was penetrated with a wound so profound, that no one could fathom it, because her

affliction was proportioned to her love; she loved Jesus with a natural love as her son, but what a son! the most perfect, the most holy, "the most beautiful among the children of men" (Ps. XLIV, 3); she loved Him with a supernatural love as her God, and because her divine and supernatural love surpassed that of all the angels and saints, and she possessed it in its fulness, she was plunged into a vast ocean of bitterness and sorrow (Lam. II, 13). O love of the Mother of God for her Son, the Man-God! Love incomprehensible, ineffable! O sorrow excessive and inconceivable! Sorrow impressed by the almighty hand of God Himself! Impenetrable abyss, which we can rather admire than conceive! But if Mary, holy and sinless, suffers in this manner, should we wish to endure nothing, we who are criminals and sinners?

II. POINT.

"Mary stood", penetrated with the most bitter sorrow, always submissive to the orders of God, whom she adored in her affliction, and even more resigned than Abraham was, when about to sacrifice his son Isaac on the mountain. Jesus raised on the Cross saw His holy Mother, and she, often lifting her eyes, filled with tears, beheld the blessed fruit of her womb suspended on the fatal tree, of death for Him, but of life for us; this sight gave new sorrow to the Son, and was a sharp sword in the heart of the Mother; for Mary saw Him exposed to the severe justice of God, as Job, who prefigured Him, speaking in his own person, exclaimed: The arrows of the Lord are drawn against me; His indignation drinks up my spirit (Job VI, 4). In this sense David sang: Lord, Thou hast made all the waves of Thine anger pass over me (Ps. LXXXVII, 8). Jesus on the Cross was also a sign exposed to the contra-

diction of the devils, of the Jews, of the Gentiles and sinners, who discharged upon Him all the poisoned darts of their malice, infidelity and impiety. Some by the tortures which they inflicted on Him, others by their crimes, their ingratitude and their foul deeds; although in different ways, all crucified Him; therefore Holy Scripture says that at the last judgment "they shall look upon Him whom they pierced" (Zach. XII, 10). Jesus was then afflicted and tormented by all; He tasted all the bitterness, bore all the weight and received all the strokes of the justice of God, irritated against sinners; and, to add to His sufferings, He saw the counter-stroke given to the heart of Mary, which was pierced and cruelly torn. In this state she could say to us with her Son: "O all ye that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow" (Lam. I, 12). O Mary, source and fountain of love! Make me feel thy sorrows; make me weep with thee, since, having inflicted death upon thy Son, I am the cause of thy sufferings.

III. POINT.

Jesus said to His Mother: "Woman, behold thy son" (John XIX, 26). Jesus does not call her Mother, lest this sweet name should tear her heart afresh, or else because He did not suffer on the Cross as the innocent son of Mary, but treated by His Father as a slave, guilty of all the sins of the world; or finally, because He was no longer regarded as living, but He was considered as dead, and thus Mary seemed to lose the name of mother, since she was without a son. "O valiant woman" (Prov. XXXI, 10), whom the Holy Ghost formerly sought and found upon Calvary! The sorrows of death encompass thee, and thou canst say with the chaste Susanna: "I am straitened on every side" (Dan.

XIII, 22), and I know not what I ought to choose; for, if thou dost choose, O afflicted Virgin, to be the Mother of a crucified God, this will be a cruel torment for thee, but what a torture for thee to lose the sweet name of Mother, beholding the death of thy beloved Son, that Son who leaves thee upon earth alone. "Woman, behold thy son" (John XIX, 26). The sorrow of Mary is so strange, that it is increased by that which ought to have afforded consolation, for another son is given to her in the person of St. John. But she knows the dignity of Jesus, whom she loses, and this exchange of the Master for the disciple, of a true God for a man, of Jesus for John, is a new sword of sorrow. In offering to her His disciple for a son, Jesus wished to give us all as children to His Mother, and Mary adopted and received us. She was by nature and in time the Mother of Jesus, the Mother of Him who is eternal, and she becomes ours by grace and love, at the foot of the Cross, but with incredible sufferings. O Jesus, God suffering and dying, who didst Thyself adopt us as Thy children amid the most cruel tortures! Our portion must be suffering and sorrow, since we are the children of Thy sorrows and the sorrows of Thy holy Mother. O most pure Virgin, give us Thy Son, and receive us through Him; and if it is too much to aspire to be thy children, may we at least be worthy to be thy servants and slaves.

Saturday after Passion Sunday.

Christ accused by His foes.

I. POINT.

Jesus was shamefully dragged through the streets of Jerusalem with a rope about His neck, His hands and body bound with rough cords. He was first led to the house of Annas, who sent Him thus bound to Caiphas. Let us consider the shame, the confusion of

Jesus entering, in this state, into a great city, where a few days before He had been received by all the people with praises and acclamations: an ungrateful people, inconstant, blind, and perfidious, too natural an image of our inconstancy and cowardice. Here are two very different entrances, the one triumphant and glorious, the other humiliating and ignominious; the one due to the greatness of Jesus, the other suitable to our sins and our iniquities, with which the divine Lamb was loaded. The appearance of Jesus, the Supreme Judge, before wicked judges; of the Holy of holies before sinners; of God before His creatures, what a humiliation! O terrifying abyss of heavenly justice! Jesus is questioned in regard to His doctrine and disciples. His doctrine was public and could not be accused, much less convicted, of error; therefore He said: "Ask those who have heard Me" (John XVIII, 21). Let St. Peter appear, and he will answer that it is Jesus who "hath the words of eternal life" (John VI, 69). Let the people be questioned, and they will say that "He hath done all things well" (Mark VII, 37). Ask the two pilgrims from Emmaus, and they will declare that "He is mighty in works and words" (Luke XXIV, 19). "Then one of the servants gave Jesus a blow" (John XVIII, 22). O infernal hand which dared to strike the Anointed of the Lord! O ye heavens, be covered with darkness and horror, and let the earth tremble to its centre at this frightful sacrilege! Then "Jesus answered: If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil; but if I have spoken well, why smitest thou Me?" (John XVIII, 23). These words teach us to join the prudence of the serpent to the simplicity of the dove (Mat. X, 16), strength to meekness, in what regards the honor of God and His service. Let us admire the divine patience with which

Jesus suffers so atrocious an injustice, and let us learn from Him to pardon an offence, not to return evil for evil, and to bear insults and injustice without losing peace and charity. All glory and honor belong to Jesus, and yet He endures blasphemies and the most unworthy treatment: confusion and contempt are due to us, because we are sinners, yet we cannot bear a trifling insult. O Jesus, if Thy humility condemns our pride, may it obtain for us the grace to suffer patiently with Thee, and for Thee.

II. POINT.

“They sought false witness against Jesus” (Mat. XXVI, 59). If we appeal to truthful witnesses, heaven and earth will answer: “It is He who hath made us” (Ps. XCIX, 3). From the highest heavens the Father will speak, John the Baptist will cry aloud from the desert, the saints of the Old and the New Law will declare all together, that He is holy. Even the devils themselves, from the depths of their abyss, the traitor Judas, the governor Pilate, will all proclaim the holiness of Jesus. It is then true, O Lord, that Thou dost suffer, not as a criminal, but as Jesus, as the Saviour of sinners. Jesus, conjured by the holy name of God, confessed Himself the true Son of God; and by the declaration of this fundamental truth of faith, He wished, as Chief of the martyrs in sustaining the truth, to be judged guilty, and condemned to death. But even then He astonished the judges by the threat of His future advent: “You shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven” (Mat. XXVI, 64). Oh, if the words of Jesus bound and condemned terrify the wicked, what will be the effect of this terrible sentence which He will pronounce at the tribunal of His judgment: “Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire” (Mat. XXV,

41). Jesus in the fetters of His enemies endeavors to convert them, showing them the light of His truth, and predicting the chastisements of His justice; but these unhappy creatures answer only by insults and mockery. By common consent He is declared guilty of blasphemy and deserving of death, and, as such, He is abandoned to the insolence of a troop of vile soldiers. O great God, in this state Thou dost call Thyself by Thy prophets "the most abject of men" (Is. LIII, 3), "the reproach of men and the outcast of the people" (Ps. XXI, 7). "Then did they spit in His face, and buffeted Him; and others struck His face with the palms of their hands, saying: "Prophecy, O Christ, who is he that struck Thee?" (Mat. XXVI, 67). O Lord, who art Thou? What has become of Thy power? Why dost Thou deliver Thyself to such violent and insupportable outrages? Say but one word, and the earth will open to swallow up these sacrilegious men, or fire from heaven will fall upon them to consume them. Jesus suffers in silence and with unchanging patience; He does not turn away from those who strike Him, who give Him blows, and cover Him with spittle (Is. L, 6). He wishes to be filled with reproaches (Lam. III, 30), to expiate our vanity and the delicacy of our pride, which is unwilling to endure anything. But who are they, that renew these outrages, that spit in His divine face, if not those who mock at holy things, who turn humility and Christian simplicity into derision, and who esteem it a folly to imitate Jesus in His ignominies, and to bear the Cross after Him? Let us honor the state of Jesus, who, deserted by His friends, abandoned by His disciples, finds no one that dares to defend Him and to speak for Him. He said: I considered, "I looked, and there was no one that would know Me" (Ps. CXLI, 5). O Jesus,

I recognize Thee, and I adore Thee in Thy humiliations, as my God and my Saviour; suffer me to follow Thee always: when I shall be abandoned by men, vouchsafe to receive me, and to keep me near Thee.

III. POINT.

The sin of St. Peter is another suffering of Jesus. See this fervent apostle, so cherished, so privileged by his Master, who after so many graces, forgetting all in an instant, even the protestation that he had made the same night, that though he should die with Him, he would not deny Him (Mat. XXVI, 35); nevertheless renounces Him through a pitiable fear, denies Him, blushes to acknowledge himself His disciple, and declares three times, with horrible oaths, that he absolutely knows not who He is: "I know not this man" (Mat. XXVI, 72); a frightful example of human weakness, which should be to us a great cause of fear and humiliation. Who will not walk with distrust of himself at the sight of this fall, who will dare to confide in his resolutions and his fervor, who will not listen to the counsel of St. Paul: "Let him that thinketh himself to stand, take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. X, 12)? Peter was deaf to the warnings of his Master; relying on his own strength, he neglected the danger and found himself shamefully involved in it. Jesus saw and heard all that was passing; He felt it, and His soul was more afflicted by it than by all the other pains that He endured. O worldly and timid souls, why do you, like this disciple, add affliction to the afflictions of Jesus? For you deny Him as often as you are ashamed to confess Him before men (Luke XXII, 54). O Lord, how dangerous it is to follow Thee afar off! Alas! I no longer wonder at my relapses; losing sight of Thee, I lose myself and go astray like Thy apostle. How important it is to

rise up promptly! One sin leads to another. At the first question St. Peter denies; at the second He adds an oath; at the third He is moved even to imprecations. "Jesus turning looked at Peter" (Luke XXII, 61), who, remembering the prediction of his Master, was touched with repentance and raised from sin to grace. If we have imitated him in his fall, ought we not to follow him in his repentance? "He went out, and wept bitterly" (Luke XXII, 62). The sorrow of his heart, the confusion and humiliation of his soul, the avoidance of the occasions of sin, finally, the abundance of his tears, merited for him pardon and grace to repair soon after, by three confessions of attachment and love, the three denials which fear had wrung from him. Yet, although absolved, he never ceased, during the whole course of his life, to weep over his former perfidy, according to the recommendation of the Wise Man: "Be not without fear about sins already forgiven" (Eccli. V, 5). If St. Peter always bitterly bewailed his fault, although he had received from Jesus Himself the assurance of his pardon and the reward of his tears; how, or with what security, can we set such narrow limits to our penance and our regrets, we, who have done so little to merit the blotting out of our countless falls and iniquities! Let us, then, set no limits to our tears and our sighs! May our groans and contrition continue as long as our life, that they may win for us the pardon and consolation which Jesus promises to them who repent. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Mat. V, 5).

Palm Sunday.**Christ's scourging.****I POINT.**

"The morning having come, they led Jesus bound"
(*Mat. XXVII, 2*) *"from the house of Caiphas*
to the pretorium" (*John XVIII, 28*).

Jesus, who every day passed through the streets of Jerusalem, working all kinds of miracles and "doing good to all" (Acts X, 38), was ignominiously dragged through these same streets, regarded as an impostor, despised, and exposed to the scorn of all the people. Jesus, bound as a criminal already condemned, was presented before Pilate, who was an idolater and a gentile, a shameful circumstance, often predicted by Jesus: "The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners, and they shall deliver Him to the gentiles" (Mat. XVII, 21, and Mark IX, 30). O Lord, by this new humiliation have pity on my soul, and permit it not to be delivered to its enemies at the hour of death. Jesus is delivered by Judas to the Jews, and by the Jews to the gentiles. It is a great and deplorable misfortune, when they who are most obliged to serve God, as priests and religious, betray Him by their sacrileges and their bad example! Jesus was accused of being a seditious man, who perverted the nation, stirred up the people, and forbade them to pay tribute to Caesar. O Jesus, Thou art innocent, Thou art unjustly accused; I am the guilty one, the seditious one, who, by my sins, pervert the order of Thy Providence; it is I who, by my injustice and rebellion, refuse to God the tribute and honor which are His due (Mat. XXII, 21). But Thou, O Lord, dost make peace between heaven and earth, Thou dost teach the doctrine of salvation; Thou alone dost render to God what is due to

God, that is, an infinite glory worthy of His majesty. Finally, Jesus was accused of having called Himself king; upon this, the governor questioned Him: "Art Thou the king of the Jews?" (Luke XXIII, 3); and He acknowledged that He was. Rejoice, ye daughters of Sion, Jesus declares Himself your king; behold "He cometh to you meek and poor" (Zach. IX, 9), for He adds: "My kingdom is not of this world" (John XVIII, 36). The world ungrateful, inconstant and perfidious, does not deserve to have such a king: they only merit it, who, for love of Him, despise this profane world, die to it every day, and glory in saying with Jesus: "I am not of this world" (John VIII, 23); "the world is crucified to me, and I am crucified to the world" (Gal. VI, 14). Over these Jesus Christ reigns; for His kingdom is spiritual and not temporal; He is King, not to levy taxes upon His subjects and to govern them by force, but to enrich them with His graces and to rule them with love. O Jesus, who dost come to us by Thy Blessed Sacrament in "the abundance of Thy sweetness" (Ps. CXLIV, 7), come as Sovereign King; rule with absolute dominion over all my powers, subject them to Thy will; come and reign in me; govern, command, and may all be submissive to Thee.

II. POINT.

"Pilate, learning that Jesus was of Herod's jurisdiction, sent Him to him" (Luke XXIII, 7). Jesus is led from the pretorium to Herod's house amid a concourse of people, who pursued Him with blasphemies and insults innumerable. He was presented to this wicked monarch, who questioned Him on many points; "but He answered him nothing" (Luke XXIII, 9). A new summons, a new accusation, a new ignominy for Jesus! He keeps silence before this king, as He had

done before the governor, because both were unworthy to hear the words of life from His mouth. O silence of Jesus, as admirable as His words, as it proceeds from the same wisdom. He speaks only when it behooves Him to bear witness to the truth, to instruct and edify. He is silent and opens not His mouth, when He could justify Himself; He sacrifices Himself interiorly to His Father, and regarding, in all His sufferings, His orders and His will, says to Him from His inmost heart: "I was silent, and I opened not My mouth, because it is Thou, who hast done it" (Ps. XXXVIII, 10). O silence of Jesus! which, if it fills with astonishment His impious judges themselves, should much more excite the admiration of Christians whose duty it is to imitate Him. Herod, whose curiosity the Saviour did not wish to satisfy, despised Him, and, deriding Him with all his army, clothed "Him with a white garment" (Luke XXIII, 11) as a fool. Could not Jesus in this state say to His Father and to us: It is for Thee, O Eternal Father, and to repair Thy glory; it is for you, O sinners, and to expiate your malice, that I suffer this opprobrium, and that My face is covered with confusion (Ps. LXVIII, 8). He was thus, under this garb of ignominy, led back to Pilate (Mat. XXVII, 2), who, wishing to deliver Him, proposed to the people that He, or Barabbas, a murderer, might, according to the custom of the feast, be set free. Jesus was then compared with Barabbas, the true God with a notorious robber, the Author of peace with a seditious man, the Saviour of all men with a murderer! Pilate three times addressed the people in favor of Jesus; but, O terrible blindness! O mad fury! each time with redoubled cries and more vehement clamors, the people demanded that He should be crucified. Pilate answered: "What evil hath He done?"

(Mark XV, 14). O Jesus, it is I who have done evil, it is I who have sinned, and it is I who every day renew this unjust and detestable preference of Barabbas to Thee, when I offend Thee to please creatures and myself; it is the voice of my iniquities which is heard, and which demands Thy death. O Jesus, by the merits of these excessive humiliations, to which Thou didst subject Thyself, fill all hearts with respect for Thee, and with that love of preference which is due to Thee by so many titles, and which belongs to Thee alone.

III. POINT.

“After having scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified” (Mat. XXVII, 26). Jesus is delivered to the cruelty of the soldiers. Full of rage, they fall upon Him, strip Him and inflict upon His sacred body countless heavy blows which overwhelmed Him with excessive suffering. O God, humbled under the blows of scourges! “O brightness of the glory of the Father” (Heb. I, 3), Thou art plunged in obscurity! O Eternal Greatness, humbled even to the torture of the lowest slaves! May all the angels, may all creatures become dumb and speechless at so dreadful a sight! May they remain absorbed in the most profound astonishment! Let us contemplate Jesus bathed in His own blood, His most pure flesh bruised and torn; and, casting ourselves at His feet, let us exclaim: O immaculate and holy humanity! O robe of the innocent Joseph, all dyed with blood! (Gen. XXXVII, 31). Truly it is sin which, as a wild beast, has devoured Him, that is, has bound Him to the pillar, and reduced Him to this pitiable condition! Let us represent to ourselves the meekness and patience of Jesus in the midst of this infamous and cruel torture, the looks full of clemency, which He cast upon His executioners, for whom He suffered and offered

Himself to His Father. To these exterior sufferings led us add what was hidden within, that which He suffered from the zeal which consumed Him for the glory of God and for our salvation. I pay what I do not owe, said He; yet "I deliver My body to the strikers" (Is. L, 6), and I am prepared for all Thy chastisements (Ps. XXXVII, 18). O Lord, who dost wish to endure them in all their severity, in order to deliver me from them, "enter not into judgment with me" (Ps. CXLII, 2); vouchsafe to treat me according to Thy mercy, and Thou, O holy Father, chastise me not in Thy wrath (Ps. VI, 2). We deserve all the scourges of Thy indignation; but Thy innocent Son does penance for us: all His wounds implore Thy clemency and ask pardon for us. If Thou dost wish to make us suffer with Him, as is just, O Lord, afflict our mortal and perishable bodies, but save our souls for eternity.

Monday in Holy Week.

Christ crowned with thorns,

I. POINT.

After the cruel scourging of Jesus the soldiers gathered around Him, clothed Him with a purple cloak, put a crown of thorns on His head (Mat. XXVII, 29), and a reed in His hand, as if He were a theatrical king; they spit in His face (Mark XV, 19), and, joining cruelty to ignominy, struck Him, and bending one knee to the ground, said to Him: "Hail, king of the Jews" (Mark XV, 18), and by a thousand indignities and other acts of derision, they mocked Him (Mark XV, 20). O uncreated Wisdom, didst Thou then descend from Thy throne in heaven to this miserable earth, to be the sport of men, who with unheard of inhumanity and insupportable contempt, make Thee "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity" (Is. LIII, 3). O Lord,

to what have my sins, my ingratitude, my pride and impenitence reduced Thee! These are the ornaments which my vanity has placed upon Thee; for it is to expiate it, that Thou dost suffer all this. Shall I dare henceforth to complain, seeing Thee so shamefully outraged for me! Who will give water to my head and a fountain of tears to my eyes, that I may weep day and night (Jer. IX, 1) at so strange and lamentable a sight! And how can I ever render sufficient homage and glory to Jesus for the opprobrium which He receives! God forbid that I should glory (Gal. VI, 14), if not in His humiliations and His ignominy, by which He delivers me from eternal misery! Jesus, in this state, is a scandal to the Jews and a folly to the gentiles; but for the saints and the elect He is the wisdom and power of God (1 Cor. I, 30). Let us feel the pain caused by the thorns which pierce Him, which penetrate His sacred head, and draw from it streams of blood. The Jews, with imprecations [and implacable fury, ask that His Blood may fall upon them and their children; but I, O Lord, with profound respect, adoration and humble confidence in its virtue, I venture to address to Thee this prayer: May Thy divine Blood be on me and on mine! (Mat. XXVII, 25). May it be upon me to wash me and purify me from all my sins, may it be upon me to heal my whole being; may it be upon me as a glorious ornament, to cover the nakedness of my soul, and restore the robe of innocence which I had lost; may it be upon the children of my heart, that is, upon the good desires which Thou hast enabled me to conceive, to be all Thine, that they may produce fruits of repentance and virtue worthy of eternal life!

II. POINT.

“Jesus came forth, wearing a crown of thorns and the purple garment, and Pilate said to the people: Be-

hold the Man" (John XIX, 5). Behold the Man-God disfigured in order to restore to man the image of God. His divine face is covered with blood and spittle, bruised with blows, as the prophet had foretold: "We have seen Him, and there was no beauty nor comeliness in Him"; He could not be recognized; "we have seen Him despised and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity, and His look was hidden" under ignominy and opprobrium. Thus He took our miseries; "He hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows" (Is. LIII, 24), to communicate to us His strength, His graces, His virtues. Let us admire His modesty, His patience, His silence, His meekness, His obedience: He allows Himself to be clothed and stripped of His garments, led and dragged wherever they please, without reply, without complaint, without resistance. Oh, what an example for us! Therefore St. Paul conjures us by the modesty, the mildness of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. X, 1), to follow and imitate Him; and what great power should He not have over us! "Behold the Man!" Behold the new Man, behold the Model by which we are to be reformed! "I have given you an example, that you may do as I have done" (John XIII, 15). "Behold the Man" who is a spectacle to God, to the world, to angels and to men (1 Cor. IV, 9). To God, His Father, He is a spectacle of propitiation for us. Behold, O God, Thy only and beloved Son, who thought it not robbery to make Himself equal to Thee, and yet He humbled Himself not only to the form of a servant (Phil. II, 7), but of a criminal, bearing all the sins of men, to make full satisfaction to Thy offended justice, and, by this inconceivable abasement, to repair Thy glory, and to render to Thee an honor infinitely greater than that of which

our sins had robbed Thee. Pardon us then, O Lord, since He gives to Thee far more than we owe. Jesus is a spectacle to men in various ways: a spectacle of contempt and mockery to Herod and the gentiles, of fear to Pilate; of hatred to the Jews, and the object of their rage and cruelty, which made them cry out: "Away with Him, away with Him; crucify Him!" (John XIX, 15). To the just and the elect He is a spectacle of piety, of sorrow, of adoration and love. O Jesus, give Thyself to me; I wish only for Thee, I seek only Thee, I desire only Thee. "Thou art the desired of nations" (Ag. II, 8), expected and longed for in all ages. O my God, my Saviour, my life, my treasure, the love of Heaven, the joy of the blessed, the sovereign good, the great and rich recompense of Thy saints.

III. POINT.

"Pilate delivered Jesus to them to be crucified" (John XIX, 16). They took Him away, compelling Him to carry His cross to Calvary. Behold the innocent Isaac carrying the wood of sacrifice to the mountain. Behold Jesus loaded with a Cross, less heavy by its own weight than by that of all our sins, which the eternal Father had laid upon Him. The departure from Jerusalem and the journey to Calvary were also prefigured by the scape-goat, which, loaded with the sins and maledictions of the people, was formerly driven into the desert (Lev. XVI, 10), and by the going forth of David, when, wandering on foot along the torrent of Cedron, Semei cast stones at him, and loaded him with insults and imprecations (2 Kings XVI, 13); for Jesus bears with this infamous cross all the curses, all the scourges, all the chastisements of divine justice, in order that the storm which was to burst upon our guilty heads, might be turned aside to fall on Him. O Jesus,

condemned much more by Thy love than by the injustice of Pilate, O Jesus, bearing Thy cross like a slave! This is a great humiliation for Thee, it is true; but Thou wilt soon change it into a royal sceptre, which even monarchs will adore. "Go forth now, ye daughters of Sion, and behold your King with the diadem with which His mother"—the Synagogue—"crowned Him on the day of His espousals" (Cant. III, 11). Go, Christian souls, to meet your Spouse, hear the sad sound of the trumpets which go before to lead Him to torture. Behold the Spouse coming all bloody and crowned with thorns; "go ye forth to meet Him" (Mat. XXV, 6). He is "a bloody Spouse" (Exod. IV, 25). He demands of you fruits of penance for His sufferings, tears for His Blood, and love for His love, He said to the holy women: "Weep not for Me, but for yourselves and for your children" (Luke XXIII, 28). He wishes us to weep for ourselves more than for Him; because our iniquities and our misdeeds afflict Him more than His own sufferings, because, pierced with sorrow, He sees that they will be in vain for many; therefore He adds: "If in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke XXIII, 31). If He who pays for others is thus treated, if He who is holiness and innocence itself is thus punished for the sins of others, what chastisements will be reserved for sinners, if they trample under foot the blood of the Redeemer by their obduracy, their ingratitude and their impenitence. O Jesus, it is just that at least we should bear our cross with Thee. Let us go and die with Him (John XI, 16); let us go from the camp, that is, from ourselves; let us share in His humiliations (Heb. XIII, 13, that we may one day have a share in His life and glory. O Jesus, Thy love condemns me to hate myself

with a holy hatred, that I may love only Thee. May this be henceforth the rule of my conduct!

Tuesday in Holy Week.

The crucifixion.

I. POINT.

“And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, they crucified Him there.”

(Luke XXIII, 33.)

Let us accompany Jesus and ascend with Him to Calvary; it is, doubtless, the mountain which is called “The Lord seeth” (Gen. XXII, 14), upon which Abraham was about to immolate his son Isaac, that is, upon which the eternal Father will immolate His eternal Son; it is the Bethel of Jacob, “the house of God and the gate of heaven” (Gen. XXVIII, 17), where will be planted the ladder of the Cross, which unites heaven to earth, which reconciles men with God, which alone can enable us to attain to Him. Let us, with Moses, take off our shoes (Exod. III, 5); let us lay aside all human and earthly affections, to approach this burning bush; for the ground of Calvary is holy, since it is consecrated by the Blood of Jesus. O place of peace and war, of repose and labor, of life and death, where Jesus, by all that He suffers, and by the death to which He delivers Himself, accomplishes the salvation of the world. Having, then, come to the place of sacrifice, the executioners stripped Him, took Him and stretched Him on the Cross, and Jesus offering them His feet and His hands, they pierced them with large nails to fasten Him to this infamous gibbet. But this could not be done without causing Him excessive and inexpressible suffering, the feet and the hands being most sensitive, because in them are united a multitude of nerves. Thus the

torture of the Cross was, at the same time, the most ignominious and cruel of all tortures. O Jesus, "obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross"! (Phil. II, 8). But, Lord, whom dost Thou obey? It is no longer God Thy Father only; it is no longer Mary and Joseph; but tigers thirsting for Thy blood, Thy most implacable enemies, the lowest and most contemptible of men. O great God, Thou art indeed well avenged! Thou art amply indemnified for the disobedience of Adam and the rebellion of his children, by a sacrifice so worthy, but so difficult, so painful and so bloody! O my Saviour, may these sacred nails pierce my hardened heart, may the hammers break it, may Thy Blood soften it, may Thy obedience render it docile, humble, submissive, and may I die a thousand times rather than relapse into sin, which makes Thee suffer such cruel tortures.

II. POINT.

Jesus, thus nailed, is lifted up with the Cross. His adorable Body, held and supported only on wounds, is tortured by every shock; His suffering is universal, the keenest and the greatest that can be imagined, a suffering which receives new increase every moment. Truly it was then that "from the soles of His feet to the crown of His head there was no soundness in Him" (Is. I, 6). By this universal pain He wished to heal the whole man, and merited for him the grace to suffer nothing, either in body or soul, which could not be offered to Him, which could not be united to His sufferings and sanctified by them. Jesus on the Cross suffered from all men and in every way. He suffered from His enemies, who, not satisfied to see their rage glutted by the cruel state to which they had reduced Him, insulted His sorrows, feasted on them, made them the subject of their derision,

and, with insolent and mocking looks, loaded Him with blasphemies and outrages (Mat. XXVII, 39). The multitude of the people, who had hastened to this spectacle, insulted Him also, and forgetting His benefits, exclaimed with the blackest ingratitude: "He saved others, Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him" (Mat. XXVII, 42). "If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross" (Mat. XXVII, 40). Yes, Thou canst, O Lord, we confess it loudly, Thou canst come down from the Cross, and confound, destroy, overwhelm all these sacrilegious scoffers, but Thy love does not permit it, Thy charity restrains Thee; Thou dost wish to consummate Thy sacrifice, to complete the work of our salvation, to be a model of constancy for us in our undertakings. Lord, grant then, that after Thy example, we may rather lose life, honor and possessions than offend Thee and fail in the fidelity which we have vowed to Thee. Jesus suffers even from the presence of His friends, and, above all, of His holy Mother: the sorrow in which He sees them plunged, penetrates Him, and touches Him sensibly. Finally, the whole Man-God was afflicted, because the whole man needed to be repaired. O Jesus, the angels bless Thee in heaven for all that Thou dost suffer on earth; "the devils believe and tremble" in hell (James II, 19); but men whom Thou didst redeem at so great a price, how can they ever repay Thy goodness?

III. POINT.

"With Him they crucified two thieves, the one on His right hand, the other on His left" (Mark XV, 27). O Lord, what company! The heavenly powers esteem themselves happy in being before Thee with reverential

awe; they contemplate Thy divine perfections with complacency and are constantly attentive to Thy will, to concur in its execution; and here Thou art nailed to a gibbet between two robbers! Thou art distinguished from them only by more shameful and cruel treatment from the rage of Thy enemies. Jesus is crucified between two thieves, according to the design of the wicked for His greater confusion: thus the prophecy announced it: "He was reputed with the wicked" (Is. LIII, 12), and treated as the most guilty of all; but in the hidden designs of God He was crucified between two sinners, not as a criminal, but as He who alone can justify and save sinners: therefore He was circumcised like them, baptized with them, in order that, taking the remedies proper for their diseases, He might merit for them, and restore to them health. O Jesus, Thou art the Sovereign Physician, who came down from heaven and became weak with the weak, in order to heal us; who became man to make us gods, who took the likeness of sinful flesh to deliver us from sin, "who was made a curse" (Gal. III, 13) upon the Cross to preserve us from that which our sins had drawn upon us! Jesus suffers to deliver us from eternal suffering, and He was crucified only to glorify us. Let us hope for our salvation in view of all that He endured to merit it for us. Can we doubt that He wishes it, since He has done such great things, since He submitted to such unworthy trials, such excessive and cruel sufferings to accomplish it? It remains for us to will it with Him, but we must will it and desire it as efficaciously as He did. The glory, the salvation, which He merited for us, which He purchased for us at the cost of His Blood, is only for heaven; we must suffer on earth, and die with Him to acquire it; we must have a share in His combats, to

participate in His victories; we must imitate His patience, His humility, His sufferings and all His other virtues, if we wish to be crowned with Him. O Jesus, who dost shed Thy precious Blood to wash all the earth! May Thy Blood purify me, enlighten me and animate me with a holy ardor to follow and imitate Thee! May it inebriate me with a holy intoxication, which will make me forget and despise all that is not Thyself, that, with Thy apostle, I may henceforth live "crucified to the world, and that the world may be crucified to me" (Gal. VI, 14).

Wednesday in Holy Week.

Conversion of the good thief.

I. POINT.

Jesus on the Cross says to us: "Come, My children, hearken unto Me" (Ps. XXXIII, 12).

Let us go to this divine school of Calvary, there to receive the lessons which our heavenly Master gives us; let us go there to gather our Father's last words of life and benediction. His wounds are so many eloquent mouths which instruct us; His thorns, His nails, His Blood, His sufferings speak to us and for us, and are sources of grace and light. Jesus on the Cross was the true burning bush (Exod. III, 2), prefigured by that which Moses saw; for, as the flame burned in the midst of the thorns, without being smothered or extinguished, so the charity of Jesus showed itself greater and more ardent amid the thorns of His afflictions. "Many waters could not quench it" (Cant. VIII, 7); it gained strength there and became only more ardent. Let us contemplate Jesus in the anguish which overwhelms His soul on all sides; see Him "filled with reproaches" (Lam. III, 30), crushed with sorrow. Behold, from

the midst of this thorny bush, the flame of His love bursting forth in these words: "Father, forgive them" (Luke XXIII, 34). Each one of His sacred members endured its particular torture: nothing remained free but His tongue, and He used it in favor of His enemies. O excessive charity, too great charity, as St. Paul expresses it, "by which He loved us"! (Eph. II, 4). "O love stronger than death"! (Cant. VIII, 6). "Father, forgive them." By the sacred name of Father He implores the mercy of God for us. Speaking for Himself, He calls Him His God, because on the Cross He regards Himself not as His Son, but as guilty of all our offences; but speaking for us, He seems to forget His present state, to return to the rights of His first and natural dignity; He calls God His Father: "Father, forgive them." Oh, what power over the heart of God has not the voice of His only Son, the voice of His Blood, which "speaketh better" and more efficaciously "than that of Abel" (Heb. XII, 24). The latter cried for vengeance; the Blood of Jesus implores grace and pardon, and what He asks by His prayer, He merits by this same Blood. Jesus adds: "They know not what they do" (Luke XXIII, 34). He not only prays, He merits, He offers Himself as a sacrifice to His enemies, He even defends and excuses them. "They know not what they do," said He to His Father. No, doubtless; "for had they known the Lord of glory, they would never have crucified Him" (1 Cor. II, 8). And the sinner does not reflect that he crucifies Him afresh by his sin! He does not know how dreadful it is "to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. X, 31), after having abused His graces and trampled His precious Blood under foot! But, O excessive ingratitude! They blasphemed Him, who prayed for them, and we constantly offend Him,

who prays, and who has suffered so much for us. O Jesus, who prayest for Thy persecutors! do not abandon those who love Thee, who place all their confidence in Thy Blood shed for them, and who pardon all, that Thou mayst pardon all to them.

II. POINT.

“To-day thou shalt be with Me in paradise” (Luke XXIII, 43). Here is a great mercy, which in an instant effaces a great iniquity. The tears of the penitent and the indulgence of the Saviour, says St. Bernard, are united without any interval. The thief humbles himself, he accepts his torments as due to his sins, he says: “We receive the due reward for our sins” (Luke XXIII, 41); he is full of faith and confidence, and as soon as he knocks at the door, it is opened. He has no sooner asked for pardon than it is granted. Jesus, through His excessive goodness, gives much more than we ask. This thief asked only for a little place in His memory, when He should be in His kingdom, and Jesus promises that he shall, that same day, enter into it with Him. O Jesus, who, like a magnificent king, dost distribute kingdoms from Thy Cross, and who, as true God, dost give paradise! speak to me these same sweet and life-giving words at the hour of death. It is a true hell to be without Thee, it is a true paradise to be with Thee even on the Cross, or even in hell itself, which would then be changed into a heaven, if Thou couldst descend there. We learn from the example of this holy converted thief, that no one ought to despair of his salvation, because the mercy of God is infinite, and we cannot do Him a greater injury than to distrust His goodness (St. Thomas). Therefore despair was the greatest sin of Cain, and the consummation of that of Judas. O mercy of God, exalted even to the heavens (Ps.

XXXV, 6), and "above all His works" (Ps. CXLIV, 9), who will not hope in the merits of the Saviour! His Passion is an unfathomable abyss, in which the iniquity of a thousand worlds may be buried and effaced; His Blood is as a vast ocean, the least drop of which can wash and purify the whole earth. O Jesus, "wash me" in Thy precious Blood, "and I shall be clean"; purify me, and "I shall become whiter than snow" (Ps. L, 9). The sacrament of penance is a public fountain in which true penitents are cured of all kinds of spiritual infirmities, because there are commingled the mercy of the Lord and the Blood of the Saviour; there this saving Blood is applied, and even to our last sigh God leaves us at liberty to have recourse to it, to be converted and to return to Him. As He saves no one without his co-operation, so He excludes no one from grace and salvation, except him who, by his perverse and hardened will, renders himself unworthy. O ineffable goodness of God, who thus places our salvation in our hands, who has taken upon Himself all our difficulties, who removes all obstacles and requires of us only a sincere will! O Jesus crucified! To Thee we owe all this: time is too short to praise Thee; therefore may I chant Thy mercies throughout eternity! (Ps. LXXXVIII, 2).

III. POINT.

"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Mark XV, 34). The dereliction of Jesus on the Cross was universal. He was abandoned by all men, by the Jews, gentiles, friends, disciples, and even, in a certain sense, by His holy Mother, for she was at the foot of the Cross, but without any power to assist Him: on the contrary, her presence added to His sufferings. He received the counter-stroke of those by which she was

overwhelmed. The heavenly spirits no longer appeared either to strengthen Him, as in the garden of Olives, or to serve Him, as in the desert; therefore He said by His prophets: "I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the gentiles there is not a man with Me" (Is. LXIII, 3). "I looked for one that would grieve together with Me, but there was none, and for one that would comfort Me, and I found none" (Ps. LXVIII, 21), nor one who would save My life. "Flight hath perished from Me" (Ps. CXLI, 5), that is, the means to fly. Jesus was even abandoned by Himself, and He delivered Himself without reserve to torments and sorrows. But His Father, for love of whom He suffers all this abandonment, will no doubt indemnify Him. Yet He exclaims: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Mark XV, 34). This repetition shows the force of His anguish and the violence of His sorrow. He dared not call Him His Father, because He sees Himself treated as a guilty slave, and He feels all the weight of His anger and severe justice. O Jesus, plunged in our miseries, overwhelmed with the deluge of our iniquities! It is not surprising that Thou didst find no assistance in creatures, who are in themselves so indigent and unworthy! But that, lifting Thy voice to Thy Father, Thou didst find Thyself in still deeper affliction, in an extremity of inexplicable sorrow and unspeakable anguish, this is inconceivable! O holy Father! how severely dost Thou treat Thy Son in order to spare Thy slaves! Truly, Thou didst not spare Him, that we might be saved (Rom. VIII, 32). O immense and incomprehensible charity! But Thou, O Jesus, dost suffer all this to glorify Thy Father and to secure our happiness; for so great a price was not needed for our redemption. O inestimable goodness! O Lord,

leave me not, do not abandon me, and never permit me to stray from Thee, either during my life or at the moment of my death. Receive me at that last hour into the arms of Thy mercy!

Holy Thursday.

Institution of the Blessed Eucharist.

I. POINT.

“Jesus, rising from table, laid aside His garments, girded Himself with a towel, poured water into a basin, washed the feet of His disciples and wiped them with the towel with which He was girded.”
(John XIII, 4.)

Jesus rose from His royal throne, from His heavenly table; He stripped Himself of the garments of His glory and majesty: He girded or clothed Himself with our weak humanity. He poured out His Blood to wash and purify us, and by His virtue and His divine merits, He wiped away and effaced the shameful stains from our souls. “If I wash thee not”, said He to St. Peter, “thou shalt have no part with Me” (John XIII, 8). The Saviour by these words shows us, that if He does not Himself wash away our stains, we shall never have any part with Him in the heavenly inheritance, into which nothing defiled is admitted. Another important lesson contained in these same words is, that it is not lawful for any one to sit at the sacred table of the Eucharistic Banquet until he has been plunged in the salutary bath of the precious Blood in the sacrament of penance, and until he has there been cleansed from his mortal sins, and, as far as possible, delivered from all affection to venial sin. O Jesus, O Lord Jesus! Wash and sanctify not only my feet, but also my hands and my head, that is, my heart, my mind, my thoughts, my

affections, my senses, all my faculties, that being purged from all iniquity and purified by Thy sacred merits, there may be nothing in me that could displease Thee, or prevent me from uniting myself to Thee and receiving the gift of Thy immense liberality. We see also another disposition necessary to approach the Eucharist worthily in the surprising humiliation of Jesus, when, before communicating, He prostrated Himself at the feet of His disciples, even at those of the traitor Judas. We should, then, humble ourselves with Him before exalting ourselves in receiving Him, following the example which He Himself gave us. But what an example, O Lord, when I contemplate Thee, at whose "Name every knee should bend" (Phil. II, 10), bending Thy own knee before poor sinners; Thee, in whose hands the Father has placed all His power, using them to wash the feet of Judas! At this sight I am filled with astonishment and terror. And now, O Lord, where shall I go to be more humbled than Thyself? I should then plunge myself even into hell; but Thou dost humble Thyself, only to deliver me from it: at least, O Lord, may Thy humiliations humble me; may they destroy my pride, may they make me sincerely humble; may I realize the danger of my disease by the strength of the medicine which Thou dost use to cure me! What pride will not be confounded at Thy inconceivable abasement!

II. POINT.

Jesus, after having given an example to His disciples, after having purified them still more from their interior than from their exterior stains, institutes the august Sacrament of His Body. This is the effort of divine charity; this is the master-piece of His power and wisdom. All the wisdom of the world could not imagine anything so great; God alone could conceive

and execute a design so worthy of His goodness and magnificence. Yes, the incomparable goodness of the Saviour of our souls in this astonishing mystery rises even above the heavens, since not satisfied with giving us all the treasures of His graces, He establishes His abode in the midst of us, as our Brother, a name which He does not disdain to take, and as the companion and guide of our pilgrimage. He does more; He gives Himself to us as food and drink: He nourishes us with the Bread of immortality, to be in us a germ of resurrection and eternal life, and to unite Himself so closely to us, that we may be entirely changed and transformed into Him. A lamb will no longer be immolated in commemoration of the departure from Egypt, but it will be the holy and sacred Body of Jesus Christ, God made man, who, having offered Himself to His Father as a pure and spotless Victim, will be immolated upon the Cross for our Passover, that is, to make us pass from sin to grace, from the earthly life of the old man to the heavenly and divine life of the New Man, from ourselves to God. Let us prepare for Him an immolated heart and a mortified flesh, to correspond to such an unspeakable benefit. This day also Jesus, instituting the most holy Sacrifice of the Mass, abolishes the old sacrifices, perpetuates and renews daily the oblation of His Body which He made on Calvary, and of which it had been foretold: "From the rising of the sun till the going down thereof there is sacrifice in every place, and a clean oblation is offered to My Name" (Mal. I, 11); on this day also Jesus Christ established and consecrated priests, giving them power and authority to do every day and perpetually in the Church, what He did once in the Cenacle before dying for us. O what favors, what abundant mercies! And how shall we correspond to them worthily?

III. POINT.

“Jesus, having loved His own, loved them to the end” (John XIII, 1). Jesus, through His excessive love, first became man like us; but through the magnificence and prodigality of this same love, He gives Himself to us. In the Incarnation, He contracted a general union with all men, clothing Himself with a nature like unto ours; in the Eucharist He transforms Himself into each one of us individually. His charity in the first mystery abases God even to man, and in the second it elevates man even to God. The first is the tree of life, the second is its fruit: by the Incarnation the Blessed Virgin conceived the Word in her womb; in the Eucharist the priests receive Him in their hands to pass Him into their hearts and those of the faithful. O precious gift worthy of the love of a God! But this love receives new splendor from the time and circumstances in which Jesus instituted the Sacrament which is pre-eminently holy, because it contains the Author of all holiness. St. Paul says: “In the same night in which He was betrayed” (1 Cor. XI, 23). At the same hour, at the same moment that men were plotting against Him the blackest crime, the most enormous perfidy, whilst they were preparing for Him chains, thorns, scourges, a gibbet, He was preparing for them “the Bread of heaven”, which contains all sweetness and delight (Wis. XVI, 20). O supreme goodness opposed to our extreme malice, what heart will not be softened by so much tenderness! Jesus, being about to leave this world, makes a will in favor of those, who will drive Him forth and put Him to death. His ingenious charity enables Him to find the means to survive Himself, to remain with them upon earth, to be a perpetual assistance against their enemies, the Viaticum

of their pilgrimage, a living source of graces, an earnest of eternal life, finally, the most sacred pledge of His love, and the memorial of the passion and death which He is about to undergo for them. O testament full of love! O precious gift! Unheard of liberality! Excessive and ineffable charity! O Lord, make us worthy to feel and acknowledge forever a benefit so marvellous.

Good Friday.

Jesus Christ on the cross, our teacher.

I. POINT.

Jesus with a lamentable voice cried out: "I thirst."

(John XIX, 28.)

There was in Him no sound part; not one of His senses or His members was exempt from suffering; His tongue alone was free; but after having used it in favor of His enemies who inhumanly crucified Him, He wished it to endure a peculiar torment—thirst—that the Scripture might be fulfilled, that all kinds of pains and sufferings might be concentrated in Him, and that the apostle might say of Him, that "He was tempted" and proved "in all things" (Heb. IV, 15), having suffered all the various chastisements due to our excesses. To add to His sufferings, His enemies without pity refuse Him water, and offer to Him vinegar, as had been foretold of Him: In My burning "thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink" (Ps. LXVIII, 22). O Jesus, who dost choose to accept this cruel beverage, mortify in me the sins of my palate. Jesus on the Cross was also tormented by another thirst which men did not know; He thirsted for the glory of His Father, and pined away with affliction at seeing Him so much offended. He thirsted for the accomplishment of His will; formerly He had said: "My meat is to do the will of Him

that sent Me, that I may perfect His work" (John IV, 34). He thirsted for its consummation by suffering and dying: a salutary thirst and ardor to obey God, to suffer for Him and glorify Him, which we ought to ask of Jesus by the merits of His thirst. Finally, Jesus thirsted for our salvation; He thirsted for the tears of our penitence, for the conversion of sinners, He desired a different beverage from that which would have relieved His body; but we, as senseless as His executioners, offer to Him only the gall of our ingratitude, and we quench His thirst with the vinegar of our malice, instead of giving Him the tears of a contrite heart and the works of conversion and penance which He desires and expects from us. O Jesus, by Thy extreme sufferings, make me weep over my sins which caused them; draw from the hardness of my heart the abundant and salutary waters of sincere contrition, that I may refresh Thy heart thirsting and burning with love, and that mine, despising the poisoned cup of vain, earthly pleasures, may henceforth thirst for Thee alone. Grant, Lord, that I may have a share in Thy chalice, that I may drink from it after Thee, that I may not refuse to participate in Thy sufferings, in order that, having drunk with Thee of the torrent of affliction of this short and fleeting life, I may merit to be inebriated forever in the torrent of Thy eternal delights.

II. POINT.

"Hear, O ye heavens," what Jesus says on the Cross, "and let the earth give ear to the words of His mouth" (Deut. XXXII, 1); let angels and men listen: it is our only Master and Teacher that speaks to us from the Cross as from a heavenly pulpit, where the example of His obedience and all His virtues urges us and induces us to imitate them; there the wounds of Jesus

indicate to us those of our soul, and all the weight of sin punished by a chastisement so severe in the person of a God. He is lifted upon the Cross like the brazen serpent, which prefigured Him, and the mere sight of which healed the deadly sting of the serpents (Num. XXI, 9). Who can look at Jesus on the Cross and continue to sin? Who can prevent his heart from burning with love for Him, seeing the state to which His charity has reduced Him? Who will find the severity of his penance too bitter? Who will complain of his afflictions, of his misfortunes, or of the combats that he has to sustain? Alas! we have not yet resisted, suffered or combated even unto blood (Heb. XII, 4), like Jesus, who poured His out in streams before pronouncing these words: "It is consummated" (John XIX, 30). All the promises of God, all the figures and prophecies are accomplished. Jesus has completed the work which His Father has given Him to do; He has fulfilled all His designs, executed all His orders at the cost of His labors, His sufferings and the excessive sorrows and opprobrium of His ignominious Passion; therefore, being ready to give up His spirit to His Father, He summons all creatures before Him, and calls them to witness that He has completed all that could be required for His glory and our salvation. He said: "What is there that I ought to have done to My vineyard, that I have not done?" (Is. V, 4). O Jesus, whom we adore and acknowledge as the "Author and Finisher of our faith" (Heb. XII, 2) and our salvation! We confess sincerely that Thou hast done all for us, O Lord! Woe to us, cowardly, slothful, ungrateful creatures, if we do not co-operate with Thee, if we do nothing for Thee. O Jesus, by the virtue of Thy merits, by the power of Thy Blood, enable me to fulfil all the designs which

Thy heart conceived for me on the Cross; enable me to accomplish all Thy will, that I may be able to say, at the hour of my death: "I have finished my course" (2 Tim. IV, 7); "Thy grace has not been vain in me" (1 Cor. XV, 10); "it is consummated" (John XIX, 30); "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (John XVII, 4).

III. POINT.

"At the sixth hour darkness covered the whole earth" (Mark XV, 33). Jesus is the Light of the world. Ought not the sun which He created to be eclipsed with horror, that it might not shine upon the execrable deicide committed in His Person? Ought it not to be eclipsed while all the perfections of its God are eclipsed, as if annihilated, His wisdom concealed under the folly of the Cross, His strength under His weakness, His glory under scorn and opprobrium, His holiness under the torture of criminals, His immortality under the shadows of death? Jesus in the silence and under the veil of this gloomy darkness, which serves Him as a retreat, to pray to His Father, speaks to Him for us with strong cries and tears offering supplications (Heb. V, 7); He implores for us His grace, His kingdom and our salvation. Let us unite our groans with those of Jesus praying on the Cross: He cannot fail to be heard, and we shall be heard with Him. Jesus prays, and while praying He suffers, He endures a cruel agony, and by all the tortures of His soul and body, He sanctifies and renders meritorious all the sufferings of His children. He redeems us from the slavery of sin, from hell and the devil. Finally, Jesus offers and immolates Himself to God as a holocaust, where all passes through the fire of His Father's justice, to repair His glory, and to make us worthy to share it with Him; and after hav-

ing suffered to the end, after having poured out all His Blood, glutted the rage of hell, fully satisfied the justice of God in all its rigor, propitiation for all the sins of the world being made by the Cross, He closes His life with these words: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit; having said this, and uttering a loud cry, He gave up the ghost" (Luke XXIII, 46). O cry of the dying Jesus, who implores life for us! This cry calls us to witness His death: Jesus dies of love for us; He dies to confirm the Will which He made in our favor, appointing us His co-heirs (Rom. VIII, 17), and the heirs of His kingdom. How shall I survive Jesus, who dies for me, except to procure His glory with all my strength, and to give Him a new life of grace in my heart? "Jesus Christ died for all", says St. Paul (2 Cor. V, 15); then all are dead in Him: now, they who live, must live no longer in themselves, but in Him and for Him who died for them. O Jesus, who didst love me, and didst deliver Thyself for me (Gal. II, 20) to torments and death! I love Thee and I abandon myself forever to Thee and to the power of Thy love. May this love make me die to sin, to the world and to myself, that I may live henceforth for Thee, that I may breathe only for Thee, in Thee and by Thee!

Holy Saturday.

Christ laid in the sepulchre.

I. POINT.

A soldier pierced the side of Jesus with a lance.

(John XIX, 34.)

Jesus by His death destroyed the tyranny of Satan; He put an end to the divorce between heaven and earth; He appeased the anger of God; but He could not soften the fury of His enemies, who, more cruel than wild

beasts, still vented their rage upon His inanimate body, and who, having torn it while living, still pierced His heart after His death. Let us not imitate these misguided creatures: after having honored and wept over the sufferings of a Man-God, after having detested sin which caused them, let us not pierce His sacred Heart afresh, afflicting Him by our relapses; let us rather penetrate into His divine Heart, let us consider the cause of the deep wound which it receives, and we shall find that it is a fresh effect of His mercy and goodness. To cleanse us more and more, He wishes to pour forth even to the last drop all the blood that remains in His veins. Having expiated our sins of thought by the thorns, those of the tongue by the gall and vinegar, those of the flesh by the scourging, our injustice and all our evil actions by His wounds and His death, He finally expiates all these sins together by the wound of His Heart, because all sin has its origin in the heart. By this visible wound, He wishes also to reveal the invisible wound which His love for us had inflicted; the lance transpierced His body, to manifest the secret of His Heart, that is, His ineffable charity. O my Saviour, hide me, in the evil days, in this adorable Heart, in this secret place of Thy Tabernacle (Ps. XXVI, 5), that no temptation may ever separate me from Thee, or cool the ardor of my zeal and my attachment to Thee.

II. POINT.

“Joseph went in boldly to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus” (Mark XV, 43). A secret disciple of Jesus during the life of the Saviour, Joseph openly declared himself after His death; with intrepid courage he despised the danger to which his request exposed him, and having obtained the body, he went to take his Master down from the cross. Nicodemus and he em-

balmed the body of Jesus, and carried it to the sepulchre. We find in this mystery a model of the dispositions which we ought to have at this holy season, in order to partake of the Paschal Communion worthily. We are about to receive the precious deposit of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ; we are going to bear in our arms, like Joseph and Nicodemus, Him who sustains the heavens: may it be with the same respect and the same devotion. The sepulchre in which they laid Him, was in a garden (John XIX, 41). May our soul be "a garden of delights", adorned with all kinds of virtues. The tomb is "hewn in the rock" (Luke XXIII, 53). Let us prepare ourselves for the holy mysteries by penance and mortification, let us cut off all that is defective and superfluous; we must immolate ourselves, in order to be nourished with the immolated flesh of the Divine Lamb. The tomb was quite new (John XIX, 41); if our heart cannot have this quality, let us repair and recover by penance the precious innocence which sin has destroyed. Henceforth let us take care that nothing defiled shall enter it again. Let us make room only for Jesus; and when the Saviour has once entered, let us carefully close the entrance, let us put all our senses on guard, that He may never go forth; let us pray that His image may remain engraved there, as we see it still to this day, on the winding sheet which had the honor to envelop Him; may His image be imprinted in our souls, by a faithful imitation of His life and virtues.

III. POINT.

The soul of Jesus, at the moment of its separation from His most holy body, descended into hell. To this excess did Jesus wish to abase Himself and thus crown His humiliations: this induces the Church to exclaim:

“Who is He who has ascended, but He who first descended even into the lowest parts of the earth?” (Eph. IV, 9). It is true, however, that Jesus alone “free among the dead” (Ps. LXXXVII, 6) does not descend into the region of darkness as a captive, but as the Deliverer of captives, to withdraw them from captivity and to make them partakers of His triumph. His presence breaks their chains and sets them at liberty; it enlightens them with a divine light, fills them with joy, consolation, and delight, and changes these gloomy dungeons into a paradise of pleasures, into another heaven; the innumerable company of the just, who for so many ages had sighed for the Redeemer, finally possess among them “the Desired of the nations” (Agg. II, 8), the Saviour, the expectation and “the desire of the eternal hills”, that is, of the angels and the saints of all times. O Jesus, to Thee nothing is impossible; change my heart, break its bonds, enlighten it, warm it, and may it wear henceforth no chains but those of Thy holy love, until it shall please Thee to deliver it from its prison, that it may praise and bless Thee forever among the hearts of all the just.

Easter Sunday.

Christ's resurrection.

I. POINT.

“This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us be glad and rejoice therein”, and be filled with delight on so beautiful a day (Ps. CXVII, 24).

God is the Author of ages; He has made all days; but this day among others, a day of marvels and mysteries, a day of greatness and lights, a day of glory and joy, is attributed to Him pre-eminently. This is the day which He has made, and on which He has put the

finishing touch to the greatest of His works; it is the day when, clothing Himself with glory, He becomes the Author and Object of ours, and makes us say with His prophet: "The Lord hath given us grace and glory" (Ps. LXXXIII, 12); grace which He merited for us by suffering, and glory which He shows us by rising again. It is on this day, and by the mystery which we now commemorate, that all the others receive their consummation and their final perfection; for Jesus, after having destroyed death and sin by His death, repairs our life by His resurrection; and as God, after having finished the work of the creation of the world, "rested on the seventh day" (Gen. II, 2), sanctified this day, consecrated it and wished it to be celebrated in the course of ages with a peculiar worship: so Jesus, after having completed on His Cross the work of our redemption, distinguishes this day in which He enters into His glory and His repose, and consecrates it forever in His Church to the honor of His resurrection. O Jesus, make us share in the labors of Thy life and Thy Passion, that we may one day share in the glory and repose of Thy holy resurrection.

II. POINT.

"He is risen, He is not here" (Luke XXIV, 6). Jesus went forth from the sepulchre, alive and glorious, without the stone being removed, penetrating it with the virtue of His glorified body. At the moment of His resurrection His soul rose to His Father with adoration and thanksgiving. The royal prophet says: "Thou hast changed my mourning into joy; Thou hast cut my sack-cloth, and compassed me with gladness" (Ps. XXIX, 12). Then He returned victorious from hell, after having stripped it, despoiled it, disarmed the devil and destroyed sin; at this moment He passed from

death to life, from the obscurity of the tomb to the splendor of light, and to a state immortal and inaccessible to sorrow. We should honor this mystery by passing from sin to grace, from the flesh to the spirit, from creatures to God, from our self-love to His most pure love. Let us then cast away the old leaven of malice and wickedness, since Jesus Christ has been sacrificed for our Passover, that is, to merit for us this passage, this happy change, necessary for our salvation. St. Augustine says: Let us remember that Jesus has been Conqueror and Victim, and that He is Conqueror, only because He has been a victim by dying on the Cross; let us then die and sacrifice ourselves with Him.

III. POINT.

On this holy day the sacred humanity of Jesus was filled with consolation in His soul, in His body and in all His faculties; for the joy and glory of the resurrection correspond to the anguish and the ignominy of the Cross. This joy is so great that the human heart is incapable of receiving and comprehending it, and it must be plunged and absorbed in it. The tongue cannot express this glory, nor can the eyes bear its splendor and magnificence. Let us sigh for this ineffable happiness; for what part in it can we expect to have, in this place of our exile, except through hope? Jesus is our head, for He says: "Where I am, there shall My servant be also" (John XII, 26). If then we have shared His sufferings, if we have followed Him to Calvary, we shall rejoice and shall be glorified with Him" (Rom. VIII, 17). He comes to give us the pledge and assurance of this in holy Communion, nourishing us with His living and glorious Body, to be in us a germ of resurrection, and a seed of life eternal and glory. Jesus says: "If you loved Me, you would indeed be glad, because I go to

the Father'' (John XIV, 28). If we have a spark of gratitude at the remembrance of what He has done for us, if we are sensible of His excessive love, ought we not to be transported with holy delight in seeing Him pass from a state of contempt and extreme suffering to the pinnacle of happiness and glory? O Jesus, we glorify Thee with heaven and earth; we praise Thee, we bless Thee, and we give thanks to Thee for Thy triumph and Thy victory.

Monday in Easter Week.

Christ's condescension.

I. POINT.

Two disciples were going to Emmaus, and Jesus approaching joined them (Luke XXIV, 15).

Jesus becomes a pilgrim with the pilgrims, weak with the weak, afflicted with the afflicted; in a word, He makes Himself all to all, to gain all (1 Cor. IX, 22). O excessive goodness of Jesus, which sanctifies all our states, all our dispositions, all our actions by some action or circumstance of His life. To render His grace acceptable and more useful to souls, He proportions and accommodates it to times, to places and all the various circumstances; thus in the garden He appears as a gardener to Magdalen; as a pilgrim to the travelers; as a doctor learned in the law to the scribes; and as Eliseus bowed down and shortened himself over the widow's son (4 Kings IV, 34), to raise him to life; so Jesus, to give us life, condescends to our weakness and makes Himself little with the little. O adorable condescension of the supreme Majesty! Why, O Lord, do we not rather subject ourselves to all the motions of Thy Holy Spirit? How sweet it is, how desirable, to have Jesus for the companion of our steps, of our thoughts, of our

journeys, of our life! St. Bernard says: If you write to me, and I do not see Jesus in your letter, I take no pleasure in it; if you dispute or confer, it pleases me not, if the Name of Jesus does not sound in my ears: all the nourishment of my soul is insipid, if not seasoned with this salt; it is dry and arid, if it is not impregnated with this oil. O Jesus, be always and everywhere with me, may I never lose sight of Thee! Be the only object of my attention and desires!

II. POINT.

“Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things that have been done there in these days?” (Luke XXIV, 18). Jesus is truly the only Son of God in the Blessed Trinity; He alone of the Divine Persons abased Himself so far as to become man for us; He alone is God and Man; He alone is the Son of a Virgin, He alone is the Mediator between God and men (1 Tim. II, 5). He alone is holy, without spot and without sin. O Jesus, may I enter into a holy solitude with Thee, and, in imitation of Thee, may I converse here below as a pilgrim and a stranger! May I use the things of earth in passing, without fixing my affections on them! May I seek and aspire unceasingly to that future city (Heb. XI, 16), which is eternal and permanent in heaven! Jesus after the resurrection was truly a stranger upon earth; for heaven, and not this land of the dying, was the abode suitable to His humanity. He sojourns still among us in the Most Blessed Sacrament as in a kind of exile, even to the end of ages. O Jesus, may I attach myself to nothing on earth, may I live here as a stranger, that after this exile it may please Thee to receive me into the heavenly Jerusalem.

III. POINT.

The greatness of the goods to come is such, that it causes all the labors and sufferings of this life to be forgotten, because, according to the apostle, they bear no proportion to "the future glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. VIII, 18), not even to a single moment of this glory and the joys of heaven. Therefore, Jesus risen seems to have already lost the memory of His past trials; He asks what these things are, as if He no longer remembered them, as formerly Joseph, raised to high fortune, called his son Manasses, that is, Forgotten, saying: "God hath made me forget" all the trials and persecutions which I have endured (Gen. XLI, 51). Jesus, in the strength of His love, regards all that He has already endured as little; and, being ready to suffer still more, were it expedient, He asks what this means. So the elect will say at the judgment: When, O Lord, did we clothe Thee, or lodge Thee, or feed Thee? (Mat. XXV, 38). They will count as nothing all that they have done here below, and according to the expression of Wisdom, "they will stand against those who have taken away their labors" (Wisdom V, 1), that is, who, having shortened them, will have deprived them of the means to suffer more. All that they have endured to merit so great a reward, will appear to them less than nothing. Let us say also, that Jesus wishes to recall the memory of His sufferings, of His Passion and death; He is pleased to hear them mentioned. O memory of the Passion and the Cross, how agreeable, how dear thou art to Jesus! May my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember thee (Ps. CXXXVI, 6), if I do not regard thee, O sacred Calvary, O Cross of my Saviour, as the source and principle of my grace, my joy, my happiness and my supreme felicity!

Tuesday in Easter Week.

Christ, the author of true peace.

I. POINT.

“Jesus appeared suddenly in the midst of His disciples.” (John XX, 19.)

But at a time when they were thinking of Him, speaking of Him, and were assembled in His name; to teach us, on the one hand, that He gives us His grace through pure mercy, when and in the manner that He pleases, often even when we are not thinking of it and merit it the least; and, on the other, that if we are assembled to praise Him or to speak of Him, He takes pleasure in visiting us, according to these words: “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mat. XVIII, 20); “My delight is to be with the children of men” (Prov. VIII, 31). How useful it is to think of Jesus, to speak of Him, to unite together in His name! He appears in the midst of His disciples as the heart of His mystical body; for as the heart is the seat of the spirit and the life which it communicates to all the parts of the body, so Jesus pours life, spirit and grace into the souls of His saints, vivifying them, directing them and being in them the source and cause of all grace, of all holiness, and all supernatural operations. Jesus should be in the midst of us as our centre, and around us as our guard. We should love Him and turn towards Him as to the centre of our hearts; act by Him, by His movement, by His order, and give ourselves entirely to Him as our last end. O Jesus, be the soul of my soul, the moving spring of all my conduct, be “the God of my heart, my portion and my inheritance forever” (Ps. LXXII, 26).

II. POINT.

“Peace be to you” (John XX, 19). Sweet and efficacious words! Is there anything sweeter than the

peace of Jesus? Is there anything more powerful than His word, when He procures this peace for our hearts? But what is this peace? It is not the peace of the flesh, but that of the spirit; not the peace of earth, but that of heaven; not the peace which the world promises, but that which Jesus, the God and Author of peace, gives us; not the exterior peace of the senses, but the interior peace which tranquillizes the soul by uniting it and subjecting it to God. Of it St. Paul says: "May the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and your minds" (Phil. IV, 7). This peace is one of the fruits of the Holy Ghost and the testimony of a good conscience, of a conscience in which He has calmed the passions by the charity which He pours into it unceasingly; it is an inestimable treasure, desirable above all the kingdoms of the world. The delights of the flesh and of all riches cannot be compared with it. It brings with it all true goods and Jesus Himself, who is its source; therefore, after having said "Peace be to you", He adds: "It is I" (Luke XXIV, 36). I give this peace and I give Myself with it; I am the giver and the gift: no one can have true peace but by Me, and in possessing Me.

III. POINT.

Jesus is called "God, and Prince of peace" (Is. IX, 6), because He is the peacemaker of the world, having reconciled us with God. It was necessary that He should be God and Prince of peace, to accomplish so great a work. He also restores peace to troubled souls, for "He commands the winds and the waves" (Mat. VIII, 26), He calms our consciences: outside of Him everything agitates and disquiets. St. Augustine says: Our hearts are made for Thee, O God, and they will always be agitated until they rest in Thee. It is Jesus alone,

who gives us the peace of His Holy Spirit, and the spirit of peace. "The wicked", says David, "have told me fables, but this is not Thy law" (Ps. CXVIII, 85), which converts souls and fills them with a heavenly peace. Jesus said: It is I, who, by the combat of My sorrowful Passion, have acquired for you this peace; it is I, who have fought, conquered, triumphed, and I give you the peace acquired at the price of My Blood. How greatly should we esteem this peace, which cost the Son of God so much! As the ancient Joseph, making himself known to his brethren, said to them: "I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold" (Gen. XLV, 4); so Jesus says to men: I am your Brother, whom you sold, delivered, afflicted and crucified, but fear not: My love chose to endure all these things for your salvation, and to merit for you that peace which I offer you to-day. O goodness, O love of Jesus! O Jesus, who art the ground of our hope, the foundation of our confidence and our only refuge in all our needs, mayst Thou be praised, glorified, adored and loved forever!

Wednesday in Easter Week.

Purity of heart requisite to see Christ.

I. POINT.

*"Jesus showed Himself again to His disciples."
(John XXI, 1.)*

Jesus sends us His lights, His graces and the influence of His spirit, not once only, but many times, and by repeated invitations. He often knocks in various ways at the door of our hearts, as He manifested Himself in many and different ways to His disciples, to confirm them and us also in His faith and love. In this life He makes Himself known to us through the obscurity of faith; but He will manifest Himself clearly in the

other, in the land of the living, in the heavenly Sion, in the glory of the saints. He showed Himself first in the weakness of His flesh, and then in the glory of His resurrection, and He will finally manifest Himself in the splendor of His majesty. He presented Himself to us humble, passible and suffering in His birth, in His life and in His death. To those who recognized Him, adored Him, loved Him and imitated His abasements and sufferings, He showed Himself and will show Himself glorious, immortal and triumphant; they will see Him no longer in clouds and darkness, but "face to face" (1 Cor. XIII, 12), and in the splendor of His beauty, O Jesus, may we address this prayer to Thee with a purer and more holy intention than those who are called Thy brethren in the Gospel: "manifest Thyself to the world" (John VII, 4); make Thyself known and loved by us, O Lord, for our sanctification on earth, that in heaven beholding Thee in Thy greatness, we may glorify Thee and love Thee with that pure love, invariable and perfect, with which Thou dost merit to be loved throughout everlasting ages!

II. POINT.

"In the morning Jesus stood on the shore" (John XXI, 4). Jesus in His mortal life was seen sleeping (Mat. VIII, 24) in a boat, and walking upon the waters, in the midst of the waves and in the darkness of the night. To-day He appears no longer seated or slumbering, but standing; no longer in the night "walking on the sea" (Mark VI, 48), but in the morning on the shore, to represent to us that, after having endured the fatigue of this passing life, the angry waves and the storms of the agitated sea of this world, after having delivered Himself to the powers of darkness in the obscure night of the suffering of His Passion, He has

now entered into the repose and the splendor of His glory; but He remains on the shore to see and assist those who, still exposed to the tempests, labor and combat for Him. All the night His disciples had taken nothing, and at His word they made a successful draught (John XXI, 6). Without Jesus we can do nothing; without His grace, without His love, our thoughts are vain, our projects empty, our efforts fruitless: outside of Him all is only falsehood and vanity. "Vanity of vanities", says the Wise Man, "and all is vanity" (Eccles. I, 2). When we esteem ourselves, we go backwards instead of advancing in the way of God; on the contrary, we run, we make a happy progress, when at Thy word, O Lord, at Thy order, and relying on Thee, we act in Thy name. Be with us, then, O Lord, as with Thy servant David (2 Kings VII, 3); for in Thee, with Thee and by Thee, "we can do all things", as St. Paul says (Phil. IV, 13).

III. POINT.

"The disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter: It is the Lord" (John XXI, 7). John, because He was a virgin, recognized Jesus, a virgin and the Author of all purity, all holiness. Nothing renders the soul more susceptible of the divine light than purity, for Jesus says: "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God" (Mat. V, 8). In St. John it was also a privilege of love to know Jesus. Charity has clear-sighted and penetrating eyes. Earthly love is blind; but the love of God is full of discernment and light. St. John, who was animated with it, perceived Jesus and recognized Him: "It is the Lord!" He was drawn to Him by the strength of His love, as to his centre. St. Peter, hearing that it was Jesus, plunged into the sea, impatient to reach Him. Thus, when Jesus is announced to us,

when we know His will, let us run with fervor to meet Him: let us not deliberate on what He demands of us; let it suffice that it is the Lord who wills it and orders it, we shall infallibly find Him by obeying Him. O Jesus, enlighten my mind, inflame my heart; grant that I may go to Thee, that I may know Thee and love Thee.

Thursday in Easter Week.

The love of God, our consolation.

I. POINT.

The Lord "appeared first to Magdalen".

(*Mark XVI, 9.*)

Magdalen afflicted, and the first to seek the Lord, merited to be the first to receive His consolations. She "came to the sepulchre very early in the morning" (John XX, 1); perceiving that the stone had been removed, she was seized with fear, she ran to the apostles and said to them: "They have taken away the Lord, and we know not where they have laid Him" (John XX, 2). She animated them to search for their common Master, she called St. Peter and St. John, who came with her to the sepulchre, but they did not remain with her; this was because she surpassed them in love, and could not leave that spot. And is there one more worthy to attract her? It is equal to heaven, for heaven is the throne of the living God (Ps. X, 5); the sepulchre is the resting-place of a God dead. The angels adore the same God, some adore Him in heaven, others at the tomb. After His resurrection they speak to Magdalen, and say to her: "Woman, why weepest thou?" She expresses simply her sorrow and her love, answering: "They have taken away my Lord" (John XX, 13), conjuring them to tell her where they had laid Him whom she loves (Cant. III, 3), whom she weeps for,

whom she seeks and calls so tenderly her Lord and her Master. She does not heed the angels, she does not look at them, she thinks only of the Object of her love; she seeks not the angels of her Lord, but the Lord of the angels, and nothing can satisfy her or console her, but Jesus alone. O great saint, the beauty of the angels has no power to touch thy heart, to dry thy tears, to satisfy thy soul. Thy heart and thy mind are absorbed in Him, whom thou dost call the Lord, because of His greatness, and thy Lord because of thy love. O Jesus, may earthly objects move us no more; may we disdain even heavenly objects apart from Thee! Mayst Thou alone be the object of our complacency and our love, the centre of our desires and our repose forever. Thou alone dost merit it.

II. POINT.

Mary wept, because she loved, her tears springing from her love; therefore, they merited that she should be consoled by the angels, and favorably heard by Jesus beyond her desires and her faith. She sought Him dead, and she found Him living and glorious; she wished to anoint Him at the tomb, and she was anointed by Him with a new life of grace. The angels came down from heaven to speak to her and say: "Woman, why weepest thou?" This honored her much, but consoled her little. It was not a remedy for her sorrow; only the Lord of the angels could comfort her: in fact, He wished to be the first to announce to her His glory, therefore she leaves the sepulchre and the angels who do not tell her where to find her Beloved, and turning her eyes she perceives Him, who says to her: "Woman, why weepest thou?" But she sees Him without knowing Him, and taking Him for a gardener, she answers: "Sir, if thou hast taken Him hence, tell me where thou

hast laid Him, and I will carry Him away" (John XX, 13). O love of Magdalen, attached to the only object which she seeks in all things and everywhere. Though He should be in the house of Caiphas, surrounded by all His enemies, "I will go and carry Him away"; though He should be with Pilate in the midst of armed soldiers, "I will go and carry Him away". O love persevering, fervent and strong, to which nothing seems impossible! O love, when wilt thou conquer our weakness, when wilt thou overcome our inconstancy and our cowardice by the vehemence of thy holy ardor?

III. POINT.

"Jesus said to her: Mary" (John XX, 16). By this word He opens her eyes, He restores to her spirit and life. She recognizes Him living, whom she sought for dead; and, filled with joy and new emotions of love and gratitude, she falls at His feet to adore Him. But Jesus said to her: "Touch Me not, for I have not yet ascended to My Father" (John XX, 17). He had proved her love by not manifesting Himself to her at once; He purifies it by an apparent repulse; yet He begins to favor her with His graces, making Himself known to her, and calling her by her name. How strong is the love of God! When it possesses a soul perfectly, it sustains her in every condition of life. Jesus adds: "Go tell My brethren: I ascend to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God." He thus makes Magdalen the apostle of the apostles, the apostle even of the Head of His Church; behold how He recompenses, exalts, and gives value to her love. But, O charity, O humility of Jesus, which are not diminished by the splendor of His greatness and His triumph! He calls us His brethren, He adores one same God with us, and He gives us one same Father with Himself. What inconceivable goodness!

Friday in Easter Week.

Glory of Christ risen.

I POINT.

*“The eleven disciples seeing the Lord, adored Him.”**(Mat. XXVIII, 17.)*

“Now the Son of man is glorified” (John XIII, 31), the prince of darkness is driven from the world, the prayer of Jesus is heard: “Father, the hour is come, glorify Thy Son” (John XII, 28). O Jesus, with Thy apostles may we acknowledge Thee and adore Thee in spirit and in truth; may we give thanks to Thee and glorify Thee in proportion to the sufferings and ignominy which Thou didst endure for us! Jesus said: “All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth” (Mat. XXVIII, 18). Jesus has sovereign power over all the monarchs of the world, therefore He is called “the Prince of the kings of the earth” (Apoc. I, 5), “the King of kings and the Lord of lords” (Apoc. XVII, 14). This power will be manifested on the day of judgment; then it will be acknowledged, adored, and every creature will be subject to Jesus, either through love or fear, according to this prophecy: “The Lord said to my Lord, sit Thou on My right hand till I make Thy enemies Thy footstool” (Ps. CIX, 1). St. Paul adds that God “will subject all things under the feet of His Son” (Eph. I, 22). This power belonged to Him from the moment of His Incarnation; but He wished to suspend its effects till His resurrection: so that He had the right and not the use of it; therefore He said: “My kingdom is not of this world” (John XVIII, 36). He fled into the desert when they wished to make Him king (John VI, 15); He taught His disciples, that the first among them must become as the last (Luke XXII, 26). O Jesus, imprint these senti-

ments in me, that, after Thy example, I may fly from the vain honors of this world. O Lord, of what should we not deprive ourselves, considering that Thou didst strip Thyself of Thy majesty and supreme sovereignty, to show Thy love and to teach us humility?

II. POINT.

“All power is given to Me.” Jesus exercises His power and His sovereign authority in heaven over the angels and the blessed; they acknowledge, adore, serve and love Him most perfectly: they have no impulse but with reference to His most holy will, which is their moving spring. O magnificent bondage! For Jesus reigning in them makes them all kings. “Thou hast made us priests and kings for our God” (Apoc. V, 10). The more submissive they are to Him, the more fully do they possess the divine liberty. Thus faithful souls should be submissive to Jesus; thus they should glory in wearing His chains, in being captives of His love, dependent on Him, having no action, no desire, no will, but with entire and continual subjection to His will and good pleasure, whether He consoles them by showing them His glory, or whether He tries them by treating them as His apostle, when He said of him: “I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name” (Acts IX, 16). But, alas! as Jesus, during His mortal life, had the right, and not the use of His royalty, so He has a legitimate sovereignty over us, but He does not exercise it, because of our malice which opposes it. We arrest the course of His mercy and the effects of His designs over us; we bind His hands, we overthrow His projects, we wish to withdraw from His guidance. O my Saviour, I detest a resistance so unfortunate; destroy, root out, plant, build up, govern, rule and direct all in me: live and reign in me forever.

III. POINT.

“Go teach all nations”, preach the Gospel to all the earth (Mat. XXVIII, 19). To this mission we are indebted for our salvation, since it has been extended to us through our ancestors. Now we may exclaim: “The earth is full of the mercy of the Lord” (Ps. XXXII, 5), that mercy which was before confined to Judea; and we see the fruits of His Cross and His Blood shed for us. Jesus, before ascending to heaven, to sit at the right hand of His Father as on His throne, commits to His apostles the charge to strengthen and extend His reign and His empire upon the earth, by the preaching of the Gospel. For He is established King upon Sion, “that holy mountain” which is the Church (Ps. II, 6). Then He said to them: “All power is given to Me: Go teach all nations” (Mark XVI, 15). What a glory to the apostles and their successors, to gain kingdoms to Jesus Christ! What a prodigy! They subject to His sovereignty as many empires, or rather as many worlds, as the number of souls they convert, since a single soul is a world greater in perfection and dearer to Jesus than the whole visible world. Blessed are they who co-operate in this conquest by their labors, their prayers, and their good example.

Saturday in Easter Week.

The Blessed Virgin after the resurrection.

I. POINT.

It is not mentioned in Holy Scripture, that Jesus appeared to His Blessed Mother, or that she was present at any of His apparitions: this was the result of an admirable direction of the Holy Ghost; for all the various apparitions of Jesus were intended only to establish the belief in His resurrection in the wavering minds of the

apostles, and by them to confirm it in us; but the Blessed Virgin remained always constant in faith, firm in hope, and relying steadfastly on the promises of her Son. This mysterious moon was not eclipsed, this pillar was not shaken; therefore the sacred historians, to show that her faith did not need to be strengthened, say not a single word of her in all the mysteries of Jesus risen. O Mary, thou wast that "valiant woman" whom the Holy Ghost found (Prov. XXXI, 10); "thou art the tabernacle sanctified by the Most High", and in the midst of which He has always taken His repose without being disturbed (Ps. XLV, 5). Make us firm and constant in faith, in hope and in the love of God; grant that at least we may imitate the fervor and vigilance of the holy women in seeking Jesus, thy Son, that we may have the happiness to find Him and be consoled by Him.

II. POINT.

Nevertheless, we may believe and it is probable, although the holy evangelists say nothing of it, that Jesus appeared to His Blessed Mother at the moment of His resurrection, and that it was in a very different manner from that in which He appeared on Calvary. What a communication of sorrows on one of these occasions, and what joy on the other. The holy Mother, during the three days in which her Son lay dead, had been plunged in a sea of anguish; but at the rising of her divine Son she was surrounded with light, filled with joy, penetrated with a happiness which was perfected in heaven. We can imagine that, full of respect and love, she fell at the feet of her Son; that she received a kiss of peace and love, and that she said to Him, as formerly Jacob said to Joseph: "Now I shall die with joy, because I have seen Thy face" (Gen. XLVI, 30) glorious, and Thou dost rule not in Egypt,

but in heaven, on earth and in hell. Rejoice, O Queen of heaven, because He, whom thou didst deserve to bear in thy womb, has risen according to His word; give us a share in thy joy and thy ineffable dispositions, that thy Son may reign in us and over us.

III. POINT.

The Blessed Virgin, at the moment of the apparition of her Son, rendered to Him a homage of adoration, of thanksgiving, of gratitude for the accomplishment of the salvation of men, and of congratulation on His state of glory. Jesus enlightened her with a divine light, by which she recognized the secret and admirable ways of Providence in the work of our redemption, the great fruits to be produced by His Cross and death, the establishment and progress of the Church. She heard much more distinctly than St. Paul, "ravished to the third heaven" (2 Cor. XII, 2), secret and mysterious words, which it is not lawful for men to repeat. O Mary, who art, in the resurrection of thy Son, the "woman clothed with the sun" (Apoc. XII, 1), and penetrated with divine light, cause some rays of thy splendor to shine upon us; grant us the favor to thank Jesus with thee, in holy transports of joy, and to confess with all the heavenly court, that "the Lamb that was slain, is worthy to receive power, divinity, wisdom, strength, honor, glory and benediction" (Apoc. V, 12) for ever and ever.

First Sunday after Easter.

Incredulity of St. Thomas.

I. POINT.

"Thomas was not with them, when Jesus came."

(John XX, 24.)

The assembly of the apostles represents the Church: whoever withdraws from it, cannot be visited by Jesus;

he runs the risk of making shipwreck of his faith, and as, at the time of the deluge, all perished except those who took refuge in the ark (Gen. VII, 23), so out of the Church no one can hope for salvation. Nothing is so dangerous as to leave the company of the saints and to withdraw from the common life. You deceive yourself, then, if you hope to see the Lord and to receive His favors, when you are separated from your brethren. Truth loves not singularities and distinctions, it appears always in the midst of faithful and holy assemblies. The royal prophet says: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Ps. CXXXII, 1), bound together by the bond of one same spirit, of fraternal charity and one same kind of life! This is the counsel of St. Jerome who had experienced it. He says: One will teach you silence, another meekness, another humility; you will not follow your own will, but that of God for love of Him. This is the royal way of the saints, in which we meet Jesus, in which self-love and self-will are no more. O Jesus, grant me this grace, that I may live and die in the bosom of Thy Church, and in union with her true children.

II. POINT.

God who draws good from evil, permitted that Thomas, not being with his brethren, should be deprived of seeing Him, and should fall into a kind of infidelity in his absence: but our Lord, by His presence, raised him up, to teach us that of ourselves we may fall, but that we cannot rise without Him. Without His grace we can do nothing good for heaven, we are only able to offend Him and lose ourselves; but what care, what diligence, what charity on the part of our loving Shepherd! With what meekness He seeks the stray

sheep to bring it back to the fold upon His shoulders (Luke XV, 4), or, to speak more correctly, into His open wounds, and through His sacred side even into His divine Heart. As soon as Thomas returns to union, or re-unites himself to the company of his brethren, Jesus does not disdain to manifest Himself to him, and to permit him to touch the wounds of His body, in order to heal the wounds which incredulity had made in the soul of this faithless disciple. Let us learn from our good Saviour to bear with our brethren, and to say with St. Paul: "To the weak I became weak" (1 Cor. IX, 22); "who is weak, and I am not weak" (2 Cor. XI, 29). O Jesus, make me share Thy charity and Thy zeal for souls; but, above all, have pity on my own soul. "I have gone astray as a sheep that was lost; seek Thy servant" (Ps. CXVIII, 176); seek him whom Thou lovest, that he may love and seek Thee. Apply Thy wounds as salutary remedies to mine, that by the virtue of these charitable wounds, I may receive perfect health (Is. XXXV, 3).

III. POINT.

"My Lord and my God" (John XX, 28). What a change wrought by the right hand of the Most High! The incredulous Thomas becomes a glorious confessor: he could not believe Jesus risen; and now, transported with love and astonishment, he proclaims Him his Lord and his God. Jesus ought to be recognized because of His sacred wounds as Lord and Sovereign of our souls, since by them He redeemed them and acquired sovereignty over them; in His resurrection "He was established Judge" and Lord "of all": "My Lord and my God." O Thomas, how great is thy faith! Thou seest a man who was crucified as a criminal, who still bears the marks of his torture, and thou believest him

true God and thy God; as such thou dost adore him, and thus thou hast seen the one and hast believed the other. "Blessed are they who have not seen and have believed" (John XX, 29). O holy apostle, if by thy unbelief our faith is strengthened, how much should it increase, how much stronger should it become by thy conversion, thy faith and thy love! O Jesus, who under the veils of bread, in which Thou comest to me, art more hidden than on the Cross and under Thy wounds! There I recognize Thee and I adore Thee as my Lord and my God.

Monday after the First Sunday after Easter.

Christ brings three kinds of peace.

I. POINT.

Jesus said three times to His disciples: "Peace be with you" (John XX, 19, 21, 26), because He gives us three kinds of peace, or peace in three different ways. The wicked said: "Peace, peace, and there was no peace" (Jer. VI, 14), for the peace of the world is often war against God: on the contrary, the peace of Jesus makes us declare war against the world, against sin and the flesh. This peace is placed among the beatitudes, because it is an anticipated paradise, and bears a resemblance to the happiness of the saints; it is the portion of the children of God, and this divine quality is also their recompense: this peace is the fruit of charity by which we refer all to God as to our last end, and we are happy with Him as our only and sovereign good, we subject our minds to His light, our will to His good pleasure, and our whole being to His sovereign disposal. But as the love of God, which unites us to Him, establishes us in His peace, so sin and the love of creatures snatch it from us and separate us from it: a horrible

and pernicious effect of sin, which makes God the enemy of man, and man the enemy of God; for in Holy Scripture sinners are called enemies of God. But in Jesus and by Him a general reconciliation was made between God and us, and by His Blood peace was established between heaven and earth (Col. I, 20). By making satisfaction to God for our sins, He merited for us this grace, and restored us to His friendship; He effaced the sentence of our condemnation by the Blood which He shed on the cross; we were far from God, but we are brought near Him by the Blood of Jesus Christ (Eph. II, 13), who became Himself the bond of our reconciliation and our peace. Immortal thanks be rendered to Thee, O my Jesus!

II. POINT.

The second peace which Jesus gives us is with ourselves. This peace supposes mortification of the senses, of the inferior nature, of self-will; it establishes a subordination of the desires of the flesh to reason, and of reason to God. It is, then, our part to conquer and renounce ourselves, that Jesus may pour into us His spirit and give us peace; for He has only thoughts of peace for us (Jer. XXIX, 7), as He testifies by the prophet Jeremiah. This same peace consists not in a sweet tranquillity of the senses and the spirit, or in a pleasing satisfaction of the soul, which reposes in itself, for this repose is often deceitful, but in an humble patience in the midst of contradictions, in constant submission to God in the midst of sufferings, for Jesus says: "In your patience you shall possess your souls" in peace (Luke XXI, 19). This happens, when in contradictions and disquietude we preserve our soul unmoved in the obedience which unites us to God, so that we may say with David: Though armies should

rise up against me, my heart will not fear them (Ps. XXVI, 3). "Though I should walk through the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, because Thou art with me" (Ps. XXII, 4).

III. POINT.

The third peace is with our neighbor. It consists in union of heart, according to the desire Jesus expressed in His prayer: "That all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us" (John XVII, 21). O Jesus, to Thee it belongs to form and preserve this union with Thee, who didst make of two divided nations one single people, destroying, by Thy benignity and humanity, the wall of division which separated them (Eph. II, 14); to Thee, who didst so bring together the Christians of Thy new born Church, that they had but "one heart and one soul" (Acts IV, 32). It was Thy love which united them; it was Thy spirit which guided them, which was the bond of unchanging peace among them, which rendered their interests common, because they knew only Thine, and to maintain this precious union, they loved each other and showed themselves Thy disciples by an un-failing and universal charity which nothing could diminish. They sought only Thee, and they found Thee in sincere charity, in disinterested friendship. O Jesus, be the heart of our hearts, the soul of our souls, that we may all be united in Thee, by Thee, and for Thee forever.

Tuesday after the First Sunday after Easter.**Contemplation of Christ's five wounds.****I. POINT.**

"Put in thy finger hither, and see My hands, and bring hither thy hand, and put it into My side, and be no longer faithless but believing."

(John XX, 27.)

Thomas had said: "Unless I see the print of the nails, I will not believe." Jesus, by using these same words, proves to him that He is God; for these words which He repeated after Thomas, show clearly that He is everywhere, and that He was present when they were uttered. O Lord, "to whose eyes all things are naked and open" (Heb. IV, 13), imprint in me the reality of Thy presence; may it keep me always in the fear of offending Thee, and make me seek unceasingly to please Thee! May I see Thee continually before me, as the judge and witness of my actions, and, at the same time, as my protector, my hope and my support! The words of Jesus to St. Thomas also contain a secret reproach which smites his heart sharply: Behold, touch, put in thy hand, if thou wilt, ungrateful and obstinate man, renew these wounds. But this same reproach is addressed to us, when we believe only our senses, when we debase the truth of God to our weak reasoning; or when, through hardness of heart, we are deaf to the voice of God, and insensible to His motions. "Lord, I believe; help Thou my unbelief" (Mark IX, 23), strengthen my faith and make me docile to all Thy divine impressions.

II. POINT.

"See My hands and My side." What is signified by these words of Jesus, which each one of us should hear and take for himself, if not that our good Saviour

wishes to apply to us in particular the merits of His Passion and the efficacy of His Blood; to render proper and personal to us what He suffered for all, as if He said: My Passion, My Blood, My wounds, all the labors, all the sufferings, all the merits of My life and death, are yours; see, touch, put your finger, your hand, your heart, your soul, into these openings, that, as the prince of My apostles said, "not only my feet, but also my hands and my head" (John XIII, 9), that is, the whole man, may be reformed, cleansed, purified and sanctified in My Blood. O Jesus, who by the use of Thy sacraments, as by sacred channels, dost communicate to us the virtue of Thy holy wounds, and dost confer upon us so many and so great graces, remove from us all the obstacles of our faithlessness, destroy all the hindrances of our self-love, that we may receive Thy love in all its fulness.

III. POINT.

"See My hands and My feet" (Luke XXIV, 39). What is it to see the wounds of Jesus, if not to contemplate them attentively, and to learn from them, what is not read in books of human wisdom! O sacred wounds, holy school of the wisdom of heaven and of all the virtues! There we learn the excessive charity of Jesus, who loved us even unto death, and died for us through a pure effect of His love; there we learn the grievousness of sin, which could be effaced only by the blood of a God: and what horror, what irreconcilable hatred for it will fill our hearts! There we learn the dignity of our souls redeemed at such a price; the severity of the divine justice towards sinners, since it showed all its rigor to the only-begotten Son of God; the infinite virtue of His Blood to purify and sanctify souls. We see in the wounds of our God all this written in

large and ineffaceable characters, in eloquent terms. In the school of the wounds of Jesus we should study the science of salvation, the salvation which they unceasingly implore for us; in contemplating them we should learn to become meek, humble and obedient, after the example of the Divine Crucified.

Wednesday after the First Sunday after Easter.

We must constantly combat.

I. POINT.

“Handle and see” (Luke XXIV, 39).

Jesus makes His disciples see and touch the glorious body which He had some days before offered to God as a holy, spotless and most acceptable victim, as propitiation for our sins. His body always adorable, whether on the Cross or in glory, the salutary touch of which healed the sick on earth, still sanctifies souls every day, and the contemplation of it will beatify our eyes in heaven. Jesus shows not only the scars, but the openings also of His wounds, which were no longer bloody and shapeless, but beautiful and brilliant, as the worthy ornaments of His triumph. O wounds of Jesus, fountains of life and love for the just, asylums and retreats for sinners, may we have the happiness to hide ourselves “in the clefts of this rock” (Cant. II, 14), “elect and chosen” (1 Pet. II, 4), “rejected at first, and afterwards become the corner-stone” (Eph. II, 20), which unites and sustains the whole edifice.

II. POINT.

Jesus, having said to His apostles, “Peace be to you” (John XX, 26), showed them His hands and His side. Confirming His disciples in the faith by His words and actions, He made them see how He had Himself

acquired the peace which He gave them: for, to show His wounds, was to say to them: I give you My peace, which is the fruit of the wounds which you see; and St. Paul teaches us this, when he says that Jesus by His Cross reconciled heaven and earth (Col. I, 20). Our divine Saviour merited peace for us by combating and suffering and conquering the devil by His humiliations and sorrows. If the members must be conformed to their head, we must acquire peace at the same price, that is, by good works and mortifications, both interior and exterior. Our hearts should be wounded by the darts of charity, like that of the heavenly Spouse. The grace given to Adam was peaceful and tranquil; that of Jesus Christ is a grace of combat, a militant grace. Our occupation in this life is to subdue by the spirit the desires of the flesh (Rom. VIII, 4), the passions and vices, saying with the royal prophet: I will remark all that is unjust and corrupt in myself, "I will pursue my enemies, and I will not turn again until they are consumed" (Ps. XVII, 38).

III. POINT.

"The disciples were glad, when they saw the Lord" (John XX, 20). The apostles, overwhelmed with sadness by the absence of Jesus, were filled with joy by His presence; when the divine Sun was hidden, they were in darkness; but as soon as He re-appeared, they were surrounded with light. Without Jesus there is only death, obscurity and misery, and where Jesus is, there is life, light and joy. Jesus in His Passion had communicated His sadness to His disciples, and in His resurrection He pours joy into their hearts. "Blessed are they that mourn" and are afflicted with Jesus, "for they shall be comforted" (Mat. V, 5) with Him and by Him. But if the joy of the apostles was so great, see-

ing Jesus in His humanity on earth, what must be the joy of the saints in heaven, where they see the same Jesus in the fulness of His glory! O Jesus, the felicity of the angels, the glory and the happiness of the saints! Grant to my heart no longer to seek happiness in earthly goods; and how could we find life happy, where there is no life, but the shadow and region of death. But Thou, O Source of life (Ps. XXXV, 10), Fountain of all good, grant that I may rejoice in Thee alone.

Thursday after the First Sunday after Easter.

Three effects of holy Communion.

I. POINT.

“Stay with us, because it is towards evening, and the day is far spent” (Luke XXIV, 29).

Jesus Christ remains with us to the end, “to the consummation of ages” in the Blessed Eucharist (Mat. XXVIII, 20). It is a source of great consolation to the Church, to know that Jesus will be always and truly present and abiding with her, and never abandon her. The use of this ineffable Sacrament, so long as the world shall exist, will never be abolished: therefore it is called a “perpetual sacrifice” (Dan. VIII, 11). By this mystery Jesus dwells in us, and we in Him; but it is above all called Viaticum for the dying, because Jesus is there to aid us in the decline and evening of our life, till the moment of our death. O Jesus, we beseech Thee then, we even venture to conjure Thee, not to abandon us in this last hour; be with us, Lord, at that final moment, defend us against our enemies, receive us into the bosom of Thy mercy.

II. POINT.

“Jesus took bread and blessed and broke and gave to them. Their eyes were opened and they knew Him

by the breaking of bread" (Luke XXIV, 30, 31 & 35). These ceremonies and these words, like those of the institution of the Blessed Sacrament, show us plainly that Jesus then consecrated His true Body and gave it to His disciples. What effects, what lights, what graces did this mysterious gift produce in them! For it is said that they knew Him, that their hearts were all burning, and that they returned to Jerusalem. Three fruits of holy Communion are—to impart light to the mind, to excite love in the heart, and to urge onward to good works. It is its peculiar virtue to open the eyes to know Jesus, to taste and see how sweet He is to those who fear Him (Ps. XXXIII, 9), and much more to those who love Him, and still more to those who receive Him, and are nourished by Him in all the ardor of charity. The frequent use of holy Communion makes us recognize the goodness of Jesus and our ingratitude, His holiness and our wickedness, as the sun enables us to see the atoms which float in the air, and which its absence had concealed from us. O Jesus, Thy eyes see all my imperfections (Ps. CXXXVIII, 16); Thy presence reveals them to me: may Thy mercy efface them!

III. POINT.

"Was not our heart burning within us, whilst He spoke in the way, and opened to us the Scriptures?" (Luke XXIV, 32). If the word of Jesus is a "burning fire" (Ps. CXVII, 12), as David calls it, what will Jesus Himself be, the living and eternal Word of the Father! "God is a consuming fire" (Deut. IV, 24); how shall He not inflame all our hearts, when He unites Himself to us in the way, during the pilgrimage of this mortal life, and gives Himself to us in His divine Sacrament? There He comes full of love, of power and the desire to produce in us the effects of love, and to kindle the fire

of charity in our hearts; and how should they not be all burning, when we adore Jesus, when we touch Him, when we receive Him and are nourished with His Body? St. Chrysostom says we ought to leave the sacred table like lions breathing only fire, formidable to the devils, and all burning with the flames of holy love, to communicate it to all hearts.

Friday after the First Sunday after Easter.

Christ's wounds.

I. POINT.

Jesus wished to preserve in His glorified Body the five wounds, which He to-day shows to His disciples as the trophy of His victories and the sign of His triumph; He wished to preserve them still, that these divine wounds might be for His saints fountains of love and the object of their confidence; and for the reprobate an evident proof of the justice of God and a subject of fear. To the latter Jesus Christ seems to say by these same wounds: "Behold the Man", whom you have crucified; see the wounds which you have inflicted; the side which you have pierced: by you and for you it has been opened; but you have refused to enter therein; read in My very love the justice of your condemnation. O Jesus, may Thy wounds, the object of my most profound homage, heal the wounds of my soul; may they touch and convert my heart; may they not condemn me, but may I one day have the happiness to contemplate in the joy of Thy elect their splendor and their beauty.

II. POINT.

Jesus Christ by His death merited for us grace and glory; He made a new covenant between His Father and us, and He sealed it by the five wounds of His sac-

red Body, that by them we might have a right to the heavenly inheritance. In fact, this inheritance, in virtue of the wounds of the Saviour, is not granted to us simply as a gratuitous gift, but as a just recompense, since it has been acquired and purchased for us at an excellent and infinite price; it is then ours, not only by mercy, but by justice also; Jesus merited it for us by His sufferings. "If we have sinned, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Just" (1 John II, 1). He preserves His wounds that they may be always present to the eyes of God, and that with them He may be continually our powerful intercessor. O mighty and efficacious intercession, which is made by the wounds of Jesus! What can God refuse to us, when implored by these precious pledges of the love of His Son? O Jesus, we thank Thee and we praise Thee! We adore and kiss Thy most holy wounds as the lawful titles through which we hope for pardon.

III. POINT.

Jesus preserves His wounds, because the remembrance of His Passion is so precious to Him, that He wishes to have a memorial of it, and to bear the marks imprinted on His Body, even in the state of glory. He wishes this memory to be constantly present to the blessed as the eternal object of their gratitude. How lovingly, then, should we honor these sacred wounds! For Jesus by this representation wished to perpetuate, not only the remembrance, but also the effects and the fruits of His sufferings and death. He remained but three hours on the Cross, and His sufferings, excessive as they were, passed in a short time; but the effects are permanent, and as some sacraments imprint in the soul a character which is never effaced, so the great Sacrament of piety (1 Tim. III, 16) of the death of

Jesus Christ imprinted on His Body five ineffaceable characters, the perpetual sources of grace and glory. O Sacred Wounds, you are like the five cities of refuge (Deut. XIX, 6), in which we escape death and the chastisements of the divine justice; like the five stones of David (1 Kings XVII, 40), to combat and overthrow the infernal Goliath; like the five porches of the healing pool (John V, 2), to cure us of all kinds of infirmities. O adorable side of Jesus, thou art the nest of the dove, "the window of the ark" (Gen. VIII, 6), in which we must seek shelter in order to escape the deluge of the sins and temptations of this world.

Saturday after the First Sunday after Easter.

Faith, the rule of our judgments.

I. POINT.

"Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world," says St. John, "and this victory, which overcometh the world, is our faith" (1 John V, 4), because it closes our eyes to all that is most seductive in the world, and opens them to reveal to us the emptiness hidden under its deceitful appearances. It raises us up to heaven to contemplate another world; for faith "looks not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen" (2 Cor. IV, 18); it makes us judge of all things not according to the false prejudices of the world, but as God Himself judges. St. Paul says: "When I was a child, I thought, I spoke as a child; but when I became a man, I put away the things of a child" (1 Cor. XIII, 11); thus as Christians we ought to rise above the senses and human reasoning, to follow the light of faith. Jesus despised the vanity and the glory of the world, for He said: Blessed are the poor, the humble, and those who are persecuted and

afflicted. He did not judge of virtue by a brilliant exterior, but by the purity of a sincere heart. According to St. Jerome, men are not satisfied with the judgment of God; they prefer to consult their corrupt inclinations. They will one day be undeceived, but it will then be too late; for Jesus Christ can not be deceived. Let us then judge of all things as He did; let us condemn what He condemned; let us esteem and embrace what He esteemed and embraced.

II. POINT.

Faith, which triumphs over the world, ought to regulate not only our judgments, but also our actions. It is not enough to judge by faith, we must also act by faith. St. James says: "What shall it profit, if a man say he hath faith, but hath not works?" (James II, 14). One man acknowledges that it is unworthy of a Christian to occupy his thoughts with the greatness and esteem of the world, yet he cannot bear to have his honor, or his reputation wounded in the least; another confesses that his life ought to be a continual penance, yet he cannot resolve to practise it, and fly from idleness and pleasure. The faith which is only in the understanding, and which does not pass on to an effective will, is a dead faith (James II, 17), which will condemn instead of justifying us. Faith must live by works, our morals and our actions must be conformed to our belief, and our belief must be the moving-spring of all our conduct. Thus "the just man liveth by faith" (Rom. I, 17), and after having lived here below according to its light, he will enjoy and see in heaven that which he has believed, hoped for and merited by his submission and his good works. "As we have heard" and been instructed, so we shall see "in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God" (Ps. XLVII, 9).

III. POINT.

It is not sufficient for our actions to be conformed to the judgments and rules of our faith, they must also be animated with the spirit of faith, which is love. "Though I should have faith to remove mountains, though I should deliver my body to be burned, and distribute all my goods to the poor, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (1 Cor. XIII, 3). Charity distinguishes the faith of the faithful from that of the devils, "who believe and tremble" (James II, 19); they believe in spite of themselves, but the faithful believe through love. The devil confessed the same truth as St. Peter; both said to Jesus: "Thou art the Son of God" (Mat. XVI, 16, and Mark III, 12). Why did not the devil merit as St. Peter did, by the same confession, if not that he acted through constraint, and St. Peter through love? We must not only believe God, but we must believe in God, that is, love Him in believing, go to Him, tend to Him, refer all to Him as to our first beginning and our last end. Faith must direct our intentions and our affections, as well as our actions; it must unite us to God by the desire and the care to please Him, by a prayer full of confidence and love. Our confidence must have its source in the entire conviction that we cannot be pleasing to Him, nor do any good without His grace, and unless it excites us to attract it to ourselves by humble and continual prayer. O Jesus, give me faith and the spirit of prayer, that I may attain its perfection, which is Thy holy love.

Second Sunday after Easter.**The Good Shepherd.**

I. POINT.

"I am the Good Shepherd" (John X, 11).

There are three offices of a good and faithful shepherd: he must defend and guard his sheep from the

wolves, he must direct and guide them, he must provide them with good pasture. Jesus perfectly fulfilled these duties in our regard. He redeemed us by His death, and by this means He delivered us from sin and snatched us from the power of the devil, the infernal wolf which seeks only to scatter the flock, to devour and destroy the sheep. Jesus is the good Shepherd who shelters us within His fold, who guards us as the apple of His eye, and who gave even His life for His sheep. This last point is peculiar to Him alone; for if many, imitating Him, have sacrificed themselves for their brethren, they have found themselves in losing themselves, they have given less than they have received, for they have won crowns, like the ancient prophets, the apostles and the martyrs. O Jesus, my only and adorable Shepherd, who, out of pure goodness, didst seek Thy sheep in this world through so much labor, toil and weariness, and through death itself! May so many pains and sufferings be not in vain for me!

II. POINT.

Jesus, who is pre-eminently our good Shepherd, directs and guides His flock by His admirable providence. He has provided His Church with abundant pasturage, that is, with all things necessary and useful for the salvation of His children and the guidance of their souls, and He cares even for each one of them individually. He calls us, He instructs us, He attracts us to Himself by His word, by the sacraments, by the lights and interior motions of His grace, and by a thousand means which He offers us of going to Him, and exciting us to His love. "All things work together unto good to them that love God" (Rom. VIII, 28). Who will not hope in His goodness? Who will not abandon himself to it with full confidence? Who will

not say with David, "The Lord ruleth me, I shall want nothing" (Ps. XXII, 1). He has put me in a place of pasture; He has led me into the paths of justice for the glory of His name.

III. POINT.

Jesus, the incomparable Shepherd, fulfilled the last office by nourishing us exteriorly with His word, and interiorly with His grace. But the best nourishment which He gives us, and which is the most admirable effect of His tenderness for us, is His own substance, His Flesh, His adorable Blood. He brought us forth on the Cross, and we came out from His open side. Having thus begotten us as a father, redeemed and saved us as a shepherd, He nourishes us with His substance as a mother, who feeds her children with her own milk, —His precious Blood. Shepherds feed their sheep only to feast on their flesh, and to cover themselves with their wool; and Jesus, the divine Shepherd, who chose to be a lamb before being a shepherd, or rather who is both at the same time, covers us with His wool, that is, gives and applies to us His divine merits as a precious garment to cover the nakedness of our souls before the eyes of His Father; and He feeds us with His sacred and sanctifying Flesh, which was sacrificed for us, so that, after having made us victims with Himself, He may make us partakers of the recompense of His sacrifice, by communicating to us a life immortal and glorious.

Monday after the Second Sunday after Easter.

Christ's flock.

I. POINT.

"My sheep hear My voice" (John X, 27).

The characteristic of the sheep is to know the voice of the shepherd. If the voice of a stranger strikes its

ears, it makes no impression; therefore, when the devil by his temptations, the world by its suggestions and its promises, endeavor to make themselves heard, to engage and corrupt our affections, let us be deaf to the poisoned words of these enchanters, let us close our ears to the hissing of these serpents, let us open them, and still more our hearts, only to the voice of our true Shepherd, to the voice of Jesus, to the commandments, to the precepts, to the counsels of His Gospel, to the voice of His examples, to the voice of His ministers, who speak to us in His name, and on His part; finally, to the voice of His love and goodness, by which He insinuates Himself into our souls, enlightens them, warms them, teaches them all truth, and leads them efficaciously to believe and embrace it. O Jesus, divine Shepherd, I will listen only to Thee; I will hide Thy word in my heart, that it may correct me, and that I may sin no more against Thee (Ps. CXVIII, 11). Make me hear Thy voice, and I shall be filled with joy and consolation. May it direct my steps, and be the rule of my life.

II. POINT.

“My sheep hear My voice.” To hear the voice of Jesus Christ as faithful sheep, is to listen to Him and to receive His word with a docile heart. Therefore, the royal prophet after saying, “We are His people and the sheep of His pasture”, adds: “If you hear His voice, harden not your hearts (Ps. XCIV, 8). What will it profit us to hear God, if we do not obey Him and execute His will? Our knowledge would end only in drawing upon us a more severe condemnation. Like humble sheep, let us be always submissive to our Shepherd, that good Shepherd, who for our sakes became obedient. After these examples of our Lord, how shall men refuse to submit and to become the sheep and lambs of His

fold? Men should blush for their pride and vanity at the sight of a God, who chose to abase Himself to teach them humility! He who disdains to be a sheep of the sovereign Shepherd, to be guided by Him, will be compelled, in spite of himself, to submit to the dominion of another shepherd, terrible and cruel; for it is written: "They have been cast into hell like sheep, and death", that is, the prince of death, "shall feast upon them" (Ps. XLVIII, 15). O Jesus, receive me among the number of Thy sheep. May it be my glory to obey Thee and to depend on Thee!

III. POINT.

"My sheep hear My voice, and they follow Me" (John X, 27). There is nothing greater than to follow God: it is the abridgment of the Christian life. Therefore Jesus Christ called the apostles to follow Him, and invited them all by these words: "Follow Me" (Mat. IV, 19). And who will not be perfectly secure in walking with God? Who will fear to go astray in following Him? We must follow Him, and not go before Him. We go before Him, or precede Him, when we act by our own spirit, without invoking Him in prayer, and without consulting Him in the person of those who guide us on His part. To follow God, we must not lose sight of Him by turning aside and attaching ourselves to the maxims of the world, for which Jesus Christ reproached St. Peter: "Thou savorest not the things that are of God, but those that are of man" (Mark VIII, 33). Jesus Christ became man, made Himself visible, that we might more easily follow Him. He did all that we are commanded to do; He made Himself our model, that we might imitate Him and conform ourselves to Him. If we find difficulty in following the divine Jesus, let us animate ourselves by this sweet promise:

“I will give them eternal life, and no one shall snatch them from My hands” (John X, 28). O Jesus, I shall not be troubled, and I cannot go astray in following Thee as my Shepherd: hitherto I have often strayed away; but henceforth I will follow Thee, step by step, as Thy most faithful sheep.

Tuesday after the Second Sunday after Easter.

We should rise with Christ.

I. POINT.

“He is risen, He is not here” (Mat. XXVIII, 6).

The sacred body of Jesus has been deprived of glory during His mortal life, in order to be able to suffer and die for us. But if he who combats will be crowned (2 Tim. II, 5), if he who compassionates the sufferings of Jesus, will be glorified with Him (Rom. VIII, 17), was it not just that His sacred Body, which had remained so long in humiliation, should share the beatitude of His soul? The royal prophet had predicted that the Lord would not leave His adorable Body to corruption and worms (Ps. XV, 10), and that He would re-unite it to His soul in glory. Jesus entered there as the head of the predestined: as His members, we ought to hope to enter with Him. Job beholding this glory from afar, consoled himself in his weariness: “In my flesh I shall see my God” (Job XIX, 26); I shall see Him myself, and mine eyes shall behold Him: “this hope is laid up in my bosom”. I will sleep and take my rest in peace (Ps. IV, 9), Lord, because Thou hast established me in this confidence. The royal prophet said it also; let us say it with him, and with the same fervor.

II. POINT.

The sacred Body of Jesus became impassible in His resurrection: “Christ rising from the dead, dieth no

more'' (Rom. VI, 9). He can no longer suffer, He is invulnerable and inaccessible to sorrow: a quality which we ought to imitate spiritually by a strong and unshaken resolution to preserve the life of grace without ever losing it by sin; no longer to abandon ourselves to our vices, but to conquer and overcome all temptations. May I live for Thee, O Jesus, for Thee, who hast restored me to life! May I live, never more to die! May I lose, if necessary, the life of my body, to preserve Thy divine life in my soul! Jesus, after His resurrection, rendered His Body glorious and agile, that is, that He could in an instant transport Himself from one place to another, however remote. We ought to honor His agility by a prompt obedience to all the inspirations of grace, and by a disposition of heart which would make us say unceasingly with David: "My heart is ready, Lord, my heart is ready" (Ps. LVI, 8) to accomplish all Thy will; and with Samuel: "Lord, here I am, because Thou didst call me" (1 Kings III, 6).

III. POINT.

The Body of Jesus, in His resurrection, received subtilty by which He penetrated material things, as when He went forth from the Sepulchre without the stone's being removed, and when He entered the room where the disciples were assembled, although the doors were closed. We ought to honor this quality of the glorious Body of Jesus, by separating ourselves from all earthly and perishable things, from all that is not God, all that does not tend to Him, having so little esteem for the temporal goods which are granted to us in this world, that we may aspire unceasingly to the eternal goods, saying with David: "What have I in heaven, or what do I desire on earth, but Thee, O my God? (Ps. LXXII, 25). Finally, the sacred Body of

Jesus was clothed with a splendor which would have obscured that of the sun; but it was not yet visible to the mortal eyes of the apostles, who could not have borne its brilliance. Let us honor this quality in Jesus by our spiritual light, which is a pure and right intention called the eye of the soul: an intention which makes us behold and seek God, purely and solely, in all things. This spiritual life is also the brightness of a lively faith, by which God enlightens us, dissipates our darkness and makes known to us His will. O Jesus, give us a share in the greatness of Thy new life; make us honor and imitate Thy glorious qualities, according as Thy goodness wills, and Thy holiness demands.

Wednesday after the Second Sunday after Easter.

Christ's resurrection, the foundation of our faith.

I. POINT.

The mystery of the resurrection, in which Jesus resumed His Body and clothed it with glory, is the seal of the faith, and the confirmation of all the mysteries. Whoever believes this, readily accepts all the others. This belief is so necessary and essential to our salvation, that, according to St. Paul, "if Jesus Christ is not risen, our faith is vain" (1 Cor. XV, 17), our religion useless; for then there is no future resurrection, and having no hope in Jesus Christ for a future life, we are in this "of all men the most miserable". Therefore, Jesus took so much care to confirm His Church in the belief of His resurrection, and to render the doctrine as certain as it is salutary. How sweet, how consoling it is to think and to believe that Jesus, our Head, is risen, and that we are to rise after Him! But let us take care to render ourselves worthy to rise as He did; for St. Paul says: "We shall all rise again, but we shall

not all be changed" (1 Cor. XV, 51). Some, said Jesus, shall rise again to life, and they are the just, who have done good, but "those who have done evil, shall come forth to the resurrection of judgment" (John V, 29); let us make our choice wisely.

II. POINT.

Our hopes and our desires are raised to heaven by the resurrection of Jesus. "If you are risen with Jesus Christ, seek" and taste "the things that are above, . . . not the things that are upon the earth" Col. III, 2). To seek and to taste God, are the fruits of the resurrection of Jesus, and the proofs of our spiritual resurrection. Are we truly risen with Jesus Christ? We ought then to seek Him by good works, and to taste Him by the love and unction of charity, which excites us to confidence in Him, in His merits, in His mediation; therefore the Church makes us address all our prayers to God the Father through Jesus, thus concluding all our prayers, all our petitions: "Through our Lord Jesus Christ." O Jesus risen, by Thee we have access to Thy Father; to Thee, to the throne of Thy grace, we must have recourse to obtain mercy. The hope of our immortality and our resurrection is founded on that of Jesus: "For as in Adam all died, so in Jesus Christ all shall be made alive" (1 Cor. XV, 22). We have in holy Communion a precious pledge of this resurrection, His Body living and glorious: full of confidence let us say with Job: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that at the last day I shall rise again, . . . and in my flesh I shall see my God" (Job XIX, 25, 26).

III. POINT.

By the resurrection of Jesus we enter into a participation of His divine life: our good desires appear, our holy affections grow and are inflamed, our love is kind-

led, and we are entirely renewed. Our interior life is reformed and animated by the new life of Jesus, in order that, to render Him homage, after being entirely dead to sin, to the world and to ourselves, we may live henceforth only in Him and for Him; and that our desires, our will, our love may have no other object. Therefore "they who live, may not now live to themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again, who bore their iniquities in His own Body" (2 Cor. V, 15), "that, being dead to sin, we should live to justice" (1 Pet. II, 24), "for you were as sheep going astray; but you are now converted to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls." May I, by my conduct, prove the truth of these words.

Thursday after the Second Sunday after Easter.

The Good Shepherd and the hireling.

I. POINT.

"I am the good Shepherd" (John X, 11).

Jesus is our Father and we are His children; He is our Master and we are His disciples; He is our Lord and we are His servants; He is the Brother and Spouse of our souls, He is their Creator and Sovereign; finally, He is our Shepherd and we are His sheep. Of all the characters which He has chosen to take with regard to us, that of Good Shepherd is one of the most consoling: it best represents the infinite charity of Jesus Christ for us. O Jesus, by how many titles am I Thine! By how many engagements have I the honor to belong to Thee! In how many ways, by what pressing and numerous obligations am I obliged to serve and love Thee! O divine Shepherd, incomparable Shepherd! May I love Thee, may I follow Thee, and may I always be Thy faithful and docile sheep!

II. POINT.

“I am come, that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John X, 10). What a loving design in Jesus our good Shepherd, that we should have life, and that we should have it in abundance. He wishes us to have not only the first grace of justification, by being freed from sin and eternal death; but also the grace of sanctification, with all the graces accompanying and following it, that is, the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and a continual increase in all the virtues, even to the perfection of charity. Why do we not unite all our prayers, all our desires to those of Jesus? Why do we not correspond to His intentions, as St. Paul exhorts us: “Be zealous for the better gifts.” Why are we not faithful to correspond to His graces, in order to render ourselves worthy of that abundant life, which is to procure and merit for us another still more excellent in heaven? Jesus communicates it to us especially by the Communion of His sacred Body, for in this Sacrament “giving Himself, how shall He not, with Himself, give us all things?” (Rom. VIII, 32). In it we receive not only a participation of life and grace, but the very Author of life and the Source of grace; and where else could we draw and hope for a greater abundance?

III. POINT.

Jesus explains the difference between Himself and the hireling. He says, “the good Shepherd giveth his life for his sheep; but the hireling, when he seeth the wolf coming, flees, because he is a hireling and has no care for the sheep” (John X, 13). The hirelings are they who, as the apostle says, “seek their own interests and not those of Jesus Christ” (Phil. II, 21); who labor for the salvation of souls, but in order to win for them-

selves the esteem, the honor and the approbation of men; who seek less the glory of God than their own, who seek less their own salvation, and that of the neighbor, than the temporal reward. Jesus, the good, the true Shepherd, is far from being a hireling; for He receives no profit from us, He has no need of us, or of what belongs to us; for to Him we are only "unprofitable servants" (Luke XVII, 10). "Thou art my God," says David, "Thou hast no need of my goods" (Ps. XV, 2). Jesus Christ gave His life for us, He feeds us with His own Body; He guards us, He watches over us through charity, because He is good, pre-eminently the Good Shepherd, and He loves us as sheep that belong to Him by every title. O Jesus, may I correspond to a love so disinterested, serving Thee and loving Thee, not in the hope of any reward, but through pure love, and for Thy sake alone.

Friday after the Second Sunday after Easter.

Patience in suffering.

I. POINT.

"Jesus Christ suffered for us, leaving you an example, that you should follow His steps."

(1 Peter II, 21.)

The Church recalls to her children the remembrance of one of the principal motives which the Son of God proposed to Himself in suffering, namely, to give us an example that we might suffer after Him, and she takes care to instruct us in this. He says to us in the Gospel, that His sheep follow Him (John X, 4), that is, imitate Him, and we here see that He wishes to be followed in hardships and sufferings. If we walk in His steps, we shall see the bloody foot-prints; they will lead us to Calvary; the way is narrow and difficult, it is true, but

it is smoothed and consecrated by the steps of a God. Jesus goes before us at the head, ought not His example animate us? Let us not blush to follow Him and imitate Him; for if we are conformed to Him in His humiliations, in His sufferings, in His death, we shall also be conformed to Him in the rest, the new life and the glory of His resurrection; thus, by following this perfect and divine Model, we shall attain to the kingdom of God through many tribulations (Acts XIV, 21).

II. POINT.

“He did no sin; neither was guile found in His mouth” (1 Pet. II, 22). To suffer, not only with Jesus Christ, but like Him, we must be able to say with as much truth as He could, to those who censure us: “Who among you can convict Me of sin?” (John VIII, 46). It would be necessary to suffer while innocent, irreproachable, and irreprehensible; but, being sinners, as we are, we must at least endure our miseries with an humble conviction of our sins, and this conviction should make us say, in the midst of our trials, what the good thief said on the Cross, comparing himself with Jesus Christ. We suffer what we have greatly deserved; “but this One, what evil hath He done?” (Luke XXIII, 41). It was by these sentiments that the martyrs were sustained in their sufferings: although very innocent before men, they acknowledged themselves sinful before God, and they remembered the great difference, remarked by St. Peter, that Jesus Christ was just and holy, and they were guilty. Thus the Machabees, the martyrs in the Old Law, confessed in the presence of the tyrants, and before all the people, that they suffered less than their sins deserved (2 Mach. VII, 18), and that, if it pleased God to recompense their labors, they would owe the crown only to His goodness. O innocent

Jesus, "I have sinned, and indeed I have offended, and I have not received what I have deserved" (Job XXXIII, 27); at least, O Lord, may I, a sinner and guilty, learn from Thee to suffer with Thee, like Thee, and for Thee!

III. POINT.

"Who, when He was reviled, did not revile; when He suffered, He threatened not" (1 Pet. II, 23). These words of St. Peter indicate the two most difficult and, at the same time, the most ordinary causes of suffering in which we ought to imitate Jesus Christ—calumnies and sorrow. Calumnies and outrages are naturally so repugnant to men that many would rather lose their life than their honor: there is something in this trial which renders it more intolerable than death; but the example of Jesus Christ should moderate this sentiment in us. Considering the calumnies and blasphemies with which He was loaded, we ought to suffer with patience, and even with joy, the contempt shown us; armed with the courage of St. Paul, we ought to say: "Yet if I pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal. I, 10). We ought to be tranquil as He was, in "good report and evil report" (2 Cor. VI, 8). The soldier of Jesus Christ advances continually, without allowing himself to be cast down by injuries, or puffed up by flattery: he thinks only of pleasing God; and as false virtues seek the applause of men, true virtues flee from it, and wish to remain unknown. If we must still combat against suffering, Jesus animates us and wishes us to follow Him even to the Cross. Constancy is characteristic of the Christian. In this he differs from the infidel, that he is invincible in adversity, and raising his hopes to eternal goods, he despises and overcomes the greatest evils of this world.

Saturday after the Second Sunday after Easter.

Character of the elect.

I. POINT.*"I know My sheep, and My sheep know Me."**(John X, 14.)*

Jesus, by His divine knowledge, knows His sheep, not only from without, but also from within; He sees, He penetrates those who believe in Him: "The Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Tim. II, 19), those who love Him and will persevere to the end, because, seeing His sheep from all eternity, He chooses them and destines them for glory, and His sheep recognize Him in time by faith. Who will not wish, during the short period of this life, to know and love Him, by whom he has been known and loved in eternity? How sweet it is to be thus known by the sovereign Shepherd, and to know Him in return! But, on the contrary, how greatly should we fear these words full of terror, which He will address on the day of judgment to those who have despised Him, or failed to recognize Him here below: "Verily, I say unto you, I know you not" (Mat. XXV, 12); I have never known you. O good and loving Jesus, may I be known by Thee, and may I know Thee! This is all my happiness and my eternal life.

II. POINT.

"I know My sheep." The knowledge which the Good Shepherd has of His sheep, is the love which He has for them: "I have loved thee", He says, "with an everlasting love; therefore I have drawn thee, taking pity on thee" (Jer. XXXI, 3). "I know My sheep as My Father knoweth Me" (John X, 14). As the eternal Father knows the Man-God, whom He loves, as He finds His complacency in Him, and as He has taken care of Him, "for all things were made and created for

Him'' (Col. I, 16), so Jesus looks upon His sheep, knows them, loves them, and has a continual and merciful care over them; He thinks of them individually, He provides for their needs, He loves and cherishes them, as if each one was the only object of His love, attention and goodness. St. Paul says: "He hath loved me, and delivered Himself for me" (Gal. II, 20). Let us say it boldly with him, and let us add: He loves me, He delivers Himself, He gives Himself to me fully, entirely, without reserve, with all His graces, and all His merits, as if He had only my soul to nourish, to satisfy, to enrich and to save. O adorable Shepherd, how shall I acknowledge Thy love? I abandon myself to Thee, O Lord: may it be without reserve and forever.

III. POINT.

The knowledge of the Shepherd attracts and produces the knowledge of the sheep. "I know My sheep, and they know Me" (John X, 14). This knowledge, which is all love and mercy, liberality, and communication on the part of the Shepherd, attracts a loving knowledge, a lively and ardent gratitude on the part of the sheep. They confess that without Him they have, and can do, nothing; that from Him and in Him alone is all their happiness, their life, their treasure, their felicity and their all: following this light, they esteem and seek only Him, they love and attach themselves to Him alone; they rely, with humble, but full and perfect confidence, on His almighty goodness. The sentiment of His majesty and greatness does not diminish in them, but increases and strengthens that of their hope and love; their love increases by their knowledge, and their knowledge increases by their love. O Beauty ancient and ever new! Too late have I known Thee, too late have I loved Thee!

Third Sunday after Easter.**Time and eternity.****I. POINT.**

*“Yet a little while, and you shall not see Me,
and again a little while and you shall see
Me, because I go to the Father.”*

(John XVI, 16.)

Jesus calls “a little while” the time which was to elapse before His return to His Father, after which the apostles would see Him no more here below, and He calls “again a little while” the period of their mortal life, after which they would go to be re-united to Him, to behold, contemplate and enjoy Him in heaven. Let us suffer with them, let us willingly live in privation and without consolation, in order to merit like them the reward of our patience, and to reap eternally the fruit of our transitory sufferings. Blessed are the eyes which saw Jesus passible and mortal on the earth, but much more blessed are those which will behold Him immortal and triumphant in heaven. But no one will see Him thus in the splendor of His majesty, who has not seen Him, looked upon Him and imitated Him as his Model in His sufferings and humility.

II. POINT.

“Again a little while, and you shall see Me.” This little while represents also the period of this fleeting and perishable life, even though it should last till the day of judgment; for what are millions of ages compared with eternity? St. Peter says: “One day is as a thousand years before the Lord, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Pet. III, 8). Let us heed the warning of St. Paul: “The time is short; therefore let those that weep be as those that do not weep; let those that rejoice be as those that do not rejoice” (1 Cor.

VII, 30); the former without bitterness and impatience, the latter without affection and without attachment; finally, "let those that use this world, use it as if they used it not, because the fashion of this world passeth away" (1 Cor. VII, 31). "Let us do good while we have time" (Gal. VI, 10), "for a day will come when", according to the words of divine Truth, "no man can work" (John IX, 4). O how dear, how precious to us should the moments of this life be, since passing so quickly, and being so short, they may yet acquire for us an eternity of glory.

III. POINT.

"You shall see Me no more." It is a sentence pronounced by God Himself, that no man living shall see Him (Exod. XXXIII, 20); and the severest trial of just souls, and their greatest cause of suffering in this life is to be thus separated from God and deprived of seeing Him, even in His most holy humanity. It is true that He gives Himself to them in the Blessed Eucharist; in this august Sacrament, He is really all the consolation of our exile; but He is invisible; in it we possess Him, in it we see Him, but only with the interior eyes of the soul, and through the clouds and obscurity of faith. He said: "I am with you even to the consummation of ages" (Mat. XXVIII, 20). Blessed is he, who knows how to recognize so great an advantage, to esteem it at its true value, and to profit by it, and who makes it his delight to be with Jesus in His humble and hidden state, until he is permitted to contemplate Him in His glory—an infinite happiness to which the saints unceasingly aspire. "When shall I come, and appear before Thy face, O Lord?" (Ps. XLI, 3). I would rather die than live, since to see Thee I must die; let me die, then, that I may see Thee!

Monday after the Third Sunday after Easter.

Joy follows penance.

I. POINT.

“A woman, when she is in labor, hath sorrow because her hour hath come; but when she hath brought forth the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world” (John XVI, 21).

The pains of a mother in labor represent in an excellent manner those of penance, according to the explanation of St. Augustine on these words of the psalmist: “They were in pains as of a woman in labor” (Ps. XLVII, 7). The saint asks what these pains represent, if not the labors and groans of penance. To conceive, to bear, and to bring forth the spirit of salvation, we must weep, groan and sigh for a long time; we must labor to destroy all that can injure this new conception, efface the shameful stains of our sins, trample under foot the attractions of vice, combat the inclinations of concupiscence, stifle and overcome our passions: these are the first steps of penance, and in this manner the spirit of salvation is conceived.

II. POINT.

We must also bear this spirit of salvation as a mother bears her child, with great inconvenience and many pains: for there is no true penance without suffering. It is a burden which we must carry. They are grossly deceived who wish to do penance without its costing them anything; they would wish to pass suddenly from the state of wickedness and sin, to joy and repose—a recompense reserved for the long and painful labors of the just. Since sin is usually accompanied by pleasure, it is necessary and just that it should be expiated, not only by a sincere repentance, but also by

a penance laborious, humble, painful and persevering. We should not be contented with ceasing to sin, we should also punish ourselves for past sins. The justice of God demands a proportionate and suitable reparation; it remains for us to take up His interests and to satisfy His justice, if we wish to avoid the severity of His anger and His chastisements. David says: "I will confess against myself my injustice to the Lord" (Ps. XXXI, 5); and another prophet: "I will bear the weight of the anger of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him" (Mich. VII, 9).

III. POINT.

"She remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world." This is an expressive figure of the effect of true penance; if it mortifies and destroys the old man, if it groans and endures for some time the efforts of a wearisome labor, it finally receives the consolation and joy of seeing the new man born again, and this is, at the same time, the fruit and the sign of the sincerity of a true and entire conversion; for how many there are, who indeed shed some tears, but who cannot discharge the venom hidden in their hearts, the secret attachment to their corrupt passions? They change their garment and not their heart, they reform their exterior and not their interior, therefore we always perceive the manners of the old man, and never the works of the new man. Let us, then, enter into the interior and exterior labors of penance; let us embrace its salutary severity, if we wish to reap its fruits. Worldlings have no part in these labors, it is true; they rejoice, whilst the just suffer much to bring forth their salvation; but St. Paul says, when they shall think themselves in peace, they will be surprised by a sudden destruction (Thess. V, 3), which they will not

be able to avert, and because they avoided a few moments of suffering, they will be delivered to endless torments. O Jesus, whatever it may cost me, strip me of the fatal old man, and "clothe me with the new man, created in justice and holiness" (Eph. IV, 24).

Tuesday after the Third Sunday after Easter.

The Christian, a stranger and a pilgrim.

I. POINT.

"As strangers and pilgrims, refrain from carnal desires."
(1 Pet. II, 11.)

St. Peter wishes us to live in this world as strangers, not only in regard to earth, but in regard to ourselves and our desires, which he calls desires of the flesh; in this same sense St. Paul says, we ought to be "absent from the body to be present with God" (2 Cor. V, 8). What is this doctrine, if not that of Jesus Christ, commanding us to hate ourselves (Luke XIV, 26), to renounce ourselves (Mat. XVI, 24), that is, not to live according to the inclinations of flesh and blood (Rom. VIII, 5), according to our own spirit, but according to that of God. For they who act by the spirit of God, are the children of God. Let us not lose courage; in combating our evil desires, we cannot destroy them without encountering rude assaults; the flesh wars constantly against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; moreover, the desires and the works of the flesh are vices not only of the body, but also those of the mind and the heart, for St. Paul says, they are "enmities, contentions, quarrels, dissensions, sects, envies" (Gal. V, 20). St. Augustine says that these vices are attributed to the flesh, although they reign in the devil who has no flesh, and their source is pride, which dwells in the soul: we ought, then, to avoid as our most dan-

gerous enemies pride and all its unhappy consequences; we ought to be strangers to them, to combat them and to pursue them until we have entirely defeated and vanquished them.

II. POINT.

“As strangers and pilgrims, refrain from carnal desires.” There is no more powerful motive for us to abstain from sin, than to regard ourselves as exiles and strangers upon earth: such should be the disposition of a Christian; and as a pilgrim thinks only of the end of his journey, without troubling himself about what is passing on the way: so the Christian ought constantly to aspire to heaven without interesting himself in earthly things. Thus the patriarchs lived, of whom St. Paul says, in pronouncing their eulogy, that they looked at heaven from afar as their true country, declaring that they were strangers in this world (Heb. XI, 13). Scorning to establish themselves in permanent abodes, they lived in tents (Gen. XII, 8), and were contented to purchase sepulchres as the place of their longest sojourn. God commanded Abraham to leave his country, and he left it (Gen. XII, 1); to go to an unknown land, and he went; finally, to sacrifice his son (Gen. XXII, 2), and he prepared to do so without delay; that it was the order of God, determined him to obey, and indemnified him for all his sacrifices. He thought only of walking in God’s presence and obeying his will. Jacob declared that he was content to have food and raiment (Gen. XXVIII, 20); he said what a holy king afterwards confessed: “I am a stranger . . . and a sojourner, as all my fathers were” (Ps. XXXIII, 13). Let us, then, detach ourselves from the world, like these holy men; let us suffer misfortunes with the same patience: by their manners and customs,

they were Christians before Christianity; let us not be ashamed to follow and imitate them.

III. POINT.

“As strangers and pilgrims, refrain from carnal desires.” The saints regarded themselves as strangers on earth and citizens of heaven (1 Pet. II, 11); we, on the contrary, consider ourselves as citizens of earth and strangers with regard to heaven; we live like the world, we think, we love, we act like the world, we regulate our manners by its maxims, contrary to the admonition of St. Paul: “Be not conformed to this world” (Rom. XII, 2). What blindness! We take little pains to acquire heaven, we do not wish to make the least step to approach it; we are like worms that always eat the earth, we crawl, we take pleasure there, we make a thousand turns and windings, we never, or very rarely, leave it to separate ourselves from earthly and worldly desires, to lift ourselves towards heaven. Let us rouse ourselves from this profound intoxication; let us have a horror of the follies and amusements of the world; let us fly from its corruption, let us blush to be so far from the virtue of these holy men, who lamented over their exile and longed for heaven, their true country; they regarded and loved it as their only and supreme good; they awaited with holy impatience the blessed moment which would re-unite them to the Lord, as the apostle expresses it: I desire “to be dissolved, and to be with Christ” (Phil. I, 23). Let us, then, not only be here below as strangers, but let us be crucified to the world, and let the world be crucified to us (Gal. VI, 14).

Wednesday after the Third Sunday after Easter.**Sadness produces death.****I. POINT.***"I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice."**(John XVI, 22.)*

There is an evil sadness, which is that of worldlings, when they grieve because they do not acquire the false goods they love, or because they lose them after having obtained possession of them. This sadness is inordinate and often very sinful; "it kills the soul", according to the expression of St. Paul. He says, "the sorrow of the world worketh death" (2 Cor. VII, 10); but the sadness of which Jesus Christ speaks in the Gospel, which He announces and predicts to His disciples, is a holy and happy sadness. Of it the same apostle adds: "The sorrow that is according to God, worketh penance, steadfast unto salvation": it is born in the soul by an impression of the spirit of God, causing it to feel the miseries of its exile, or touching and penetrating it with regret for having offended God and lost His grace. This holy sorrow lifts us up to God and impels us to have recourse to Him, as David says: "I found tribulation and sorrow, and I called on the name of the Lord" (Ps. CXIV, 4). This sadness, although very bitter, does not discourage the soul; on the contrary, it sustains and strengthens it, because it is accompanied by peace and confidence. As it comes from God, so also it leads to God, who, being the source of all joy, comforts the soul at the same time that He afflicts it, and as Holy Scripture says, He heals the wound which He has made (Deut. XXXII, 39).

II. POINT.

"I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice."
If Jesus Christ sometimes leaves His children in sorrow,

to punish their offences, to correct their morals, or to try their virtue, He soon raises them up by the sweetness of His consolations, according to these words: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Mat. V, 5), not only in the other world, but even in this, where, in their very tears, they will find a source of joy. "I will see you again," said Jesus, "and your heart shall rejoice." Elsewhere He says: I am with them that are of a contrite heart. This made St. Augustine say, that the penitent is always sad, and yet he rejoices in his sadness; and St. Bernard says that sorrow for sin is necessary, but the joy inspired by confidence must be mingled with it, in order that the bitter beverage of penance may become salutary to us; and truly, if it is so comforting to shed tears over the loss of a friend, although these tears are useless and cannot restore him to us, how much more comforting should it be to weep over the death of the soul, since by weeping we restore it to life, and no one can take away this life and this joy, which begin here below and will last forever.

III. POINT.

Man cannot live without his heart seeking enjoyment in some pleasure. The earthly man is sustained by earthly pleasures, the heavenly man by heavenly pleasures; therefore the apostle says that the hope of future goods supports us under present evils. On these words of the psalmist, "Thou shalt feed us with the bread of tears" (Ps. LXXIX, 6), St. Augustine speaks thus: If this bread of tears had not some sweetness, no one would wish to eat it. Thus the joy of the true penitent in the expectation of the eternal goods, which he secures by his penance, is greater than the pain which he endures; for although the fulness of this joy is reserved for heaven, it nevertheless begins

already on earth. According to the sacred text, the apostles were filled with joy, when they suffered unjustly for the love of Jesus Christ (Acts V, 41); and St. Paul says: We appear to be sad, although we are always rejoicing; "when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. XII, 10). O Jesus, look upon me, and may Thy divine eyes restore peace, life, and joy to my soul, according to Thy promise: "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice."

Thursday after the Third Sunday after Easter.

Christ risen, our Model.

I. POINT.

"As strangers and pilgrims, refrain from carnal desires."
(1 Pet. II, 11.)

Jesus Christ, after His resurrection, invites us by His example to regard ourselves here below as travelers, who have no permanent abode, and who are only passing (Heb. XIII, 14). If in the whole course of His life He lived as such, it was more especially in His risen life; for if He conversed, it was by apparitions, and for a few short and fleeting moments. He not only had no fixed habitation, but He had none at all; He was upon earth, it is true, and was accompanied by the souls of the just whom He delivered from Limbo, and who, by His presence, enjoyed an anticipated paradise. Yet He, more than they, was in a strange land, because the proper place, suitable for glorified souls, is heaven. But Jesus, through His excessive charity, wished to prolong His abode upon earth, sojourning here as a stranger, unknown and hidden from the eyes of men, to complete the work of our salvation. After dying to cause the death of sin, He rose again to open heaven to us, and He remained still some days on earth, to en-

courage us in the way which leads to it. Let us, then, consider life as a passage, death as the end and the tomb of sin, and heaven as the goal of our journey and our true country.

II. POINT.

“As strangers and pilgrims on earth, refrain from carnal desires.” As travelers lay aside superfluous dress and ornaments, and are satisfied with simple and ordinary clothing until they have reached the end of their journey, so we ought to despise the goods, the honors, the pleasures that are offered to us here below, reserving the full enjoyment of these advantages till we have reached the heavenly country. Until that blessed moment, according to the counsel of St. Paul, let us strip ourselves of all that weighs us down, of all the engagements of earth, that we may run more quickly, and attain more surely the end to which we ought to aspire (Heb. XII, 1). Thus Jesus, during His mortal career, wished to be deprived of His glorious life in His body, and after entering into it by His resurrection, He chose to remain forty days longer deprived of the splendor of that abode of glory. Let us learn from Him to live in abnegation, in privation, in renunciation of the joys and greatness of earth, that, after having despoiled ourselves of all for love of Him, we may merit to find all in Him in heaven, and repose in the tranquil enjoyment of real goods and eternal glory.

III. POINT.

Finally, the admirable and heavenly conversation of Jesus, glorious, impassible, immortal, with His apostles, pilgrims, mortals, and subject to the miseries of this life, teaches us in what manner we ought to converse with our neighbor. It ought, like the conversation of Jesus, to strengthen our brethren weak in the

faith, to excite them and ourselves with them to virtue, to the accomplishment of our duties; it ought to be with entire detachment from ourselves, from all vanity, all self-love, through motives drawn from the glory of God, for the welfare and the salvation of souls. Our conversations and our visits should be like those of Jesus, only passing, so far as necessity or utility demands. Otherwise, we should disappear from the eyes of the world, to hide ourselves with Jesus, and converse with Him alone. We shall find Him at the altar, still hidden and solitary; there He waits for us; He is there hidden only for us, that we may go to Him more freely; let us receive Him often as the Viaticum of our pilgrimage. O Jesus, may it be our delight to remain with Thee, to offer Thee our homage, to speak only to Thee, or of Thee to our neighbor. Sanctify our conversations by Thine, and grant that we may be able to say with Thy apostle: "Our conversation is in heaven" (Phil. III, 20).

Friday after the Third Sunday after Easter.

This life's miseries and dangers.

I. POINT.

"You shall weep" (John XVI, 20).

It is a condition of this mortal life, to be not only short and transitory, and deprived of the vision of God, but also to be accompanied by all kinds of miseries. The earth is a place of tears and banishment, the portion of men is the Cross, suffering and sorrow; the mind and the body find alike here below subjects of torment and affliction; trials without, anguish within. Oh, who can love such a life, in which we are enveloped in thick darkness, plunged in extreme ignorance; we know not our own hearts, and the passions which agitate them

are domestic enemies more troublesome than those without. Who can love such a life, a life that merits rather the name of death? The moments which succeed one another and compose it, urge us and hurry us to the tomb with irresistible rapidity; and if some longing disquiets us, we cannot realize it without approaching our destruction and our death. Thus God has ordered our days, to make us seek and desire better ones, that are more constant and enduring.

II. POINT.

This life with its miseries is also full of danger; for we are never secure of our salvation. We are always liable to commit sin, and continually exposed to destruction; we are on earth, as on a sea agitated by storms and full of breakers, exposed to the risk of eternal shipwreck. The world is filled with snares for our ruin, combats are frequent and victories rare. Happy is he, who escapes! For "what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (Mat. XVI, 26). We have, besides, an enemy that never sleeps, and that pants only for our ruin. He attacks not only the weak, but the strong and the most perfect, whom he would wish to involve in his misfortune, and souls elevated even to heaven as eagles, whom he endeavors to precipitate into the abyss by relaxation and fatal apostasy. What souls has he sought to devour? Job, a model of patience and virtue; St. Peter, the prince of the apostles; and many others who have been the objects of his rage. Let the most just tremble and humble themselves! And where is the wise man who will not groan and have recourse to God with fear, seeing himself exposed to such great perils!

III. POINT.

"You shall weep, and the world shall rejoice"

(John XVI, 20). It is the ordinary lot of the saints and of the Saint of saints, Jesus Christ our Lord, to weep and suffer in this world. The Cross is the sign of the children of God, the mark of the predestined. All the just have passed through this way, they have been tried as gold in the furnace (Wis. III, 6), and by this trial they have been found worthy of God. Their patience and constancy in tribulation are the surest proof of their holiness, and we are not certain of the glory of any one, unless we are also certain that he has suffered much in this life, for the Lord chastises him whom He loves, and scourges all whom He admits to the number of His children (Heb. XII, 6). It was necessary that Christ should suffer, and thus enter into His glory (Luke XXIV, 26), as He Himself assures us. He wished to reserve the same portion for St. Paul: "I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name" (Acts IX, 16). O Jesus, my Lord, may I weep and suffer with Thee during the short period of this mortal life, that I may merit to rejoice with Thee throughout the boundless extent of eternity! We must weep now, or burn forever. O Cross of Jesus, be thou the companion of my life, till thou hast guided me to the haven of salvation in the blessed land of the living.

Saturday after the Third Sunday after Easter.

Happiness of the future life.

I. POINT.

"Your sadness shall be changed into joy."

(John XVI, 20.)

We may predict something of the excellence of the future life, by the difference between it and the present life. This present life is full of disappointment, sadness and misery; the other is blessed and full of joy. Jesus

said: "Your sadness shall be changed into joy." Then God will wipe all tears from the eyes of His saints; there shall be no more death, nor mourning, nor groans, "nor sorrow, for the former things are passed away" (Apoc. XXI, 4). O joy without bitterness! Repose without labor! Torrent of all holy pleasures without the least alloy! The saints will be immersed in and inebriated with delights, and this ineffable enjoyment will make them forget all their past sufferings. The present life is subject to a thousand dangers, the future promises a sweet and tranquil peace, free from all fear; there we shall be sheltered in the haven of salvation; there the saints can never sin, or cease to love God; they are happily incapable of suspending for a single moment the acts of His most holy love, and of being separated from Him. In this certainty they find their peace, their contentment and the crown of their happiness and felicity.

II. POINT.

The present life is obscure in its remoteness from God; but the future life is in the splendor of His glory, and its beatitude consists in the clear and intuitive vision of the divine essence. Jesus said: "A little while, and you shall see Me" (John XVI, 19). David says: "I shall be satiated when Thy glory shall appear" (Ps. XVI, 15). We are here in darkness, "in the region of the shadow of death" (Is. IX, 2). Then we shall see "a new land, the holy city" invested with the light of God (Apoc. XXI, 1). It has no need of the sun or the moon to light it, because the glory of God shines there, "and the Lamb is the lamp thereof". The nations shall walk in His light, and "night shall be no more" (Apoc. XXII, 5). Neither shall there be any curse. The throne of God and the Lamb will be there, and His servants shall serve Him. They will see His face, and

they shall reign throughout all ages. To see God, to enjoy God, to love and possess God! O infinite blessing, more excellent than any other, and of which God said to Moses: "I will show thee all good" (Exod. XXXIII, 19).

III. POINT.

The present life is fleeting, short and limited, the number of our days is uncertain; the future life is perpetual and secure; its duration is eternal. Our Lord said: "Your joy no man shall take from you" (John XVI, 22). As the damned will be forever miserable, and always immortal in their misery: so the saints will enjoy a life no longer subject to death; and this last and blessed end, which they will have attained, will be forever the end of their trials, and the beginning of a perfect happiness. After millions of ages the torments of the wicked will not be diminished, or offer any hope of an end or of any alleviation; but the happiness of the just and the elect of God will be always the same, their joy without sadness, their fulness without disgust, their repose without trouble, their glory without envy or pride; and the possession of all goods together will be without apprehension of ever losing them. O infinitely desirable eternity of glory and felicity! Ah! what matters it whether these short moments, which are now passing, be happy or unhappy, provided that we enjoy eternally an immutable felicity.

Fourth Sunday after Easter.

Return of Jesus Christ.

I. POINT.

"I go to Him who hath sent Me" (John XVI, 5).

Jesus Christ our Lord, God and Man, the only Son of God, begotten from all eternity in the bosom of the

Father, God of God, Light of light, true God of true God, was sent into this world to accomplish the salvation of the world; and after having finished the great work of our redemption, He prepared to return to His Father. "His going forth was from the highest heavens" (Ps. XVIII, 7), and the rapid course which He came to make here below, terminated likewise in heaven. His mortal life among us may be compared to the daily course of the sun, which returns to the same point from which it set forth; thus Jesus said on this subject: "I came forth from My Father, and have come into the world: again I leave the world, and I go back to the Father" (John XVI, 28). O bosom of the Father, august point from which Jesus went forth in becoming man, although He always remained there, and to which He re-ascends, never more to descend! O God, Source and supreme Author of our being! Be our last end, be the beginning and end of all our works! May we unceasingly aspire to Thee, and may we finally possess Thee forever.

II. POINT.

"I go to Him, who hath sent Me." It is a very just desire of Jesus, in which all creatures should unite, that after having consummated the work of our salvation, He should return to His Father, that He should be seated at His right hand, that He should pass from the Cross to glory, from death to eternal life, from earth to heaven, from His mortal pilgrimage to His blessed abode, from His pains and passing labors to an uninterrupted and unending rest. Jesus expresses this in these words: "I go away." O my Saviour, may I follow Thee wherever Thou goest! May I follow Thee in Thy sufferings, in Thy abandonment, in Thy humiliations! May I follow Thee to Calvary, to the tomb, and may I never leave Thee! May I follow Thee, or rather

may I remain with Thee, on Thy altars, in Thy state of annihilation, of Victim and of Sacrifice, until Thou shalt vouchsafe to receive the sacrifice of my life, which I now in anticipation make to Thee! Call me, then, and lead me with Thee into the eternal beatitude of which Thou hast gone to take possession for me.

III. POINT.

Jesus, after having completed the great design which He had in descending from heaven to earth, after having finished the work which His Father had committed to Him, and accomplished all the promises of God and the prophecies, and had endured sufficient labors, sufferings and humiliations in the space of thirty-three years, and had traveled enough on this land of the dying, said: "I go away"; I have finished My course; I have been obedient unto death, to the orders of My Father, I have accomplished His designs and His eternal decrees, I have redeemed men with a redemption ample and glorious to God (Ps. CXXIX, 7); I return, then, to Him who sent Me. O Lord, it is time, the hour is approaching; it is just, "arise, Thou and the Ark which Thou hast sanctified!" (Ps. CXXXI, 8). "Be exalted in Thy strength" (Ps. XX, 14). O Jesus, lift my desires to Thee; in imitation of Thee, with Thee and by Thee, may I finish my course, complete the work of my salvation, accomplish Thy designs upon me, and all Thy holy will! From this world may I fly to Thee, who art my life and my glory forever.

Monday after the Fourth Sunday after Easter.

The love of Christ.

I. POINT.

"It is expedient for you that I go, for if I go not, the Comforter will not come to you."

(John XVI, 7.)

Jesus gives Himself entirely to us: He came down

from heaven for our salvation, He was born for us, He labored, journeyed, toiled, suffered, watched and prayed for us; finally, He "was delivered up for our sins, and He rose for our justification" (Rom. IV, 25). He refers His Ascension and return to His Father to our advantage and profit: "It is expedient for you that I go"; as if He said to us: If it were better and more advantageous for you, I would willingly remain on earth for your sake. O Jesus, what a return of love and gratitude does Thy excessive goodness and charity demand from us! Shall we be permitted to have any reserve, or to set any limits to our love for Thee, and the effects which Thou dost expect from it? Grant, Lord, that we may love Thee with that love which is worthy of Thee, the just measure of which is to have no bounds, no limits.

II. POINT.

It was expedient and suitable, according to the counsel of the Eternal Wisdom, that the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity should co-operate in the accomplishment of our salvation. The Father "so loved the world, that He" sent and "gave His only-begotten Son" (John III, 16). The Divine Son wished to redeem us by His death: He loved us, and delivered Himself for us (Gal. II, 20). What remained but that the Holy Ghost should come to us to enrich our souls with His gifts, to sanctify them by applying to them the merits of the sufferings of the life and death of Jesus. Therefore, the Son of God, forgetting Himself to remember men whom He loves, said: "It is expedient for you," I say not for Me, but for you, "that I go," that the Spirit of consolation may come to you. I wish to send Him to you from My Father; but it has been appointed that I should send Him to you, only when I have returned to Him. We give Thee thanks, most holy and

august Trinity, for all that it has pleased Thee to accomplish in order to complete the work of our salvation. O men, who think so little of this salvation, judge of its value by what it has cost the three Divine Persons.

III. POINT.

Among men the right to depute or to send another indicates a superior power and authority. It is not so with God; in Him it is only a personal and independent property. The Father, who begets His Son, has the right to send Him to us, although the Son is co-eternal with Him, consubstantial and equal in all things; in like manner, because the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son, it was proper that Jesus should return to heaven to the throne of His glory, and that He should be seated at the right hand of His Father to send us conjointly with Him the Holy Spirit, the love of both. Jesus, as man, had by His labors and sufferings merited for us this precious gift, and as God, He gives Him to us, and pours Him into our hearts. It is just that Thou shouldst go, O Lord, that Thou shouldst leave this mortal abode: the return to Thy Father is expedient for Thee, that it may at last restore Thee to Thy rest, to Thy glory, to that felicity which is to be the joy of Thy saints and Thy elect; it is expedient for us, that Thou mayst send us Thy consoling Spirit. Lord, send this Divine Spirit, and we shall be created anew, and by Him "Thou shalt renew the face of the earth" (Ps. CIII, 30).

Tuesday after the Fourth Sunday after Easter.

God, the Author of all good.

I. POINT.

"Every best and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights."

(James I, 17.)

God alone is the source of all the goods of nature

and of grace: all comes from Him; it is He, who has made all, and who has given us all. "A man cannot receive anything, unless it be given him from heaven" (John III, 27), as the holy precursor teaches us. Therefore man is nothing, he can do nothing, he has nothing of himself: all that he is, all that he has, all the good that he can do, is a pure gift of the divine liberality, which gives to him gratuitously, according to the words which God spoke to Moses, and which are quoted by St. Paul: "I will have mercy on whom I will" (Exod. XXXIII, 19). My gifts are true gifts: no one upon earth has a right to exact them from Me, I pour them forth, and give them voluntarily and according to My pleasure. O God, who dost resist the proud and give Thy grace to the humble (1 Pet. V, 5), fill my heart with a deep conviction, which will make me confess Thy power and my weakness. May I persuade myself more and more, that there is nothing good in me which is of myself, and that I really hold all from Thee.

II. POINT.

"Every perfect gift is from above." "The works of God are perfect" (Deut. XXXII, 4). Nothing comes from His hands but what is excellent: in the beginning "He saw all that He had made, and all His works were very good" (Gen. I, 31). But if, passing over the wonders which He wrought in nature, we rise to those of grace, we cannot but exclaim: "He hath done all things well" (Mark VII, 37). If, "being born children of wrath" (Eph. II, 3), unworthy in the eyes of God and of His mercy, we have shared in the first graces only to misuse them, we have still less right to attribute to ourselves those which have followed. The great gifts of faith, of justification, of grace, which Jesus Christ has merited for us, are pre-eminently those which come only from above, which are communicated to us by the

Father of lights, and which we owe to His goodness alone. Let us say, then, with one of those whom He had most loaded with His gifts: Consider, Lord, what Thou hast done in me, and not what I have done, for if Thou seest what I do, Thou wilt condemn me, but if Thou regardest what Thou hast done for me, and in me, Thou wilt crown me" (St. Augustine).

III. POINT.

"Every perfect gift is from above." Therefore, to God alone, the Source of all light, we must attribute all the good things that we receive, and even those which we do, without appropriating anything to ourselves, saying with the prophet: It is Thou, O Lord, who hast done in us all our works (Is. XXVI, 12); and with St. Augustine: My goods are not real goods, unless they come from Thee; my miseries are real miseries, and they are my own work; and with St. Paul: God Himself works in us "what is well-pleasing in His sight" (Heb. XIII, 21). How, then, are we not penetrated with the most lively gratitude to our universal Benefactor, since St. Paul exhorts us to "give thanks to God in all things" (Eph. V, 20). If we ought to thank God always and in all that happens to us, because He orders all with wisdom, with goodness, and for our salvation, what thanks do we not owe to Him for this pre-eminently perfect gift, that is, for the grace which contains so many others, by which He has made us children of God, His friends, "His heirs, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. VIII, 17).

Wednesday after the Fourth Sunday after Easter.

The Pastors instructed by the Holy Ghost.

I. POINT.

"When the Comforter is come, He will convince the world." (John XVI, 8.)

What connection is there between the title of Com-

forter and the office of a severe censor? How shall we reconcile two things which appear so incompatible, unless the Holy Spirit Himself enlightens us, to make us understand and recognize that the first effect of His presence and grace in the soul of the sinner, is to reprove him interiorly, and to give him salutary reproaches which will arouse him from his lethargy, and excite him to a holy fear of the judgments of God, making him feel the wickedness hidden in his heart, and the dangers in the midst of which he sleeps tranquilly. A blessed disturbance, which is the path of true peace and divine consolation, of which the prophet says: Thou, O Lord, hast astonished the earth, Thou hast moved it; strengthen it, heal its wounds (Ps. LIX, 4). O Divine Spirit, produce the manifold effects of Thy grace and mercy in my cold heart.

II. POINT.

“When the Comforter is come, He will convince the world of sin.” He will reprove the world, said St. Augustine to the pastors of the Church, because He will pour into your hearts the unction of charity, which will give you a holy liberty to reprove men for their vices. In order to reprove the world with confidence, we must not love it, we must hate ourselves and love God only, and this is the characteristic of apostolic men; for to them these words are especially addressed: “Wonder not”, be not sad, “if the world hate you,” says Jesus; “know that it hath hated Me before it hated you” (John XV, 18). Let those who are clothed with the authority of Jesus Christ be animated with His spirit; let not a low and mercenary interest, let not the desire to win the love and approbation of men, induce them to dissemble holy truths and make them serve their criminal passions; let them exclaim boldly with David:

“I hated sinners”, or rather their iniquity; but “I loved Thy law” (Ps. CXVIII, 113), O Lord, and I do not pretend to be ignorant of it; I declare it loudly in the midst of the greatest assemblies (Ps. XXXIX, 10).

III. POINT.

But if it is a duty for those who guide souls, to attack vice in its very intrenchments, the true children of God ought to love, desire and seek pastors, who, as St. Paul says, do not know what it is to seduce souls by flattering words (1 Thess. II, 5). David says: Let the just man reprove me, and correct me with charity; but “let not the oil of the sinner fatten my head” (Ps. CXL, 5). And the Holy Ghost tells us that, if we reprove the wise man, he will love us the more (Prov. IX, 8). Let us not seek as friends, or spiritual fathers, flatterers who will deceive us, but let us seek physicians who will heal us. O Holy Ghost, who canst not bear iniquity (Ps. V, 5), “Thou dost chastise him, whom Thou lovest” (Prov. III, 12); Thou dost correct all those whom Thou dost receive among the number of Thy children (Heb. XII, 6). Therefore “Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me” (Ps. XXII, 4). Reprove me Thyself, and by Thy ministers: “I am ready for scourges” (Ps. XXXVII 18), “and submissive to Thy salutary reprimands.”

Thursday after the Fourth Sunday after Easter.

The Holy Ghost teaches all truth.

I POINT.

“When the Spirit of Truth shall come, He will teach you all truth” (John XVI, 13).

It is the office of the Holy Ghost to enlighten our minds, and to enable us to know and understand all the truths which we ought to know; therefore Jesus said

to His disciples: The Holy Ghost will teach you all the things that I have told you (John XIV, 26), that is, He will give you understanding to penetrate their meaning, memory to retain them, a relish for them to make you love them, fervor to practise them. It is in this sense that St. John says: "You have received the unction of the Holy Ghost", and you know all things; act so that the unction which you have received from Jesus Christ, may remain in you, and you will have no need of any one to instruct you; for what His unction teaches you, is the truth (1 John II, 27). O light of the Holy Ghost, light not only brilliant but burning, for the Holy Ghost enlightens and inflames at the same time, come, pour light into our minds, kindle the fire of charity in our hearts, guide us to the Son, who is the Eternal Truth, and make us love and keep His commandments.

II. POINT.

"When the Spirit of Truth is come, He will glorify Me" (John XVI, 14). The Son of God glorifies His Father, and the Holy Ghost glorifies the Father and the Son. As the Son had glorified His Father here below, according to the words which He addressed to Him on the eve of His Passion: "Father, I have glorified Thee on the earth" (John XVII, 4), so the Holy Ghost also glorifies Jesus: He comes for this, and He descended upon the apostles to make them know, believe, and, by their ministry to all men, adore the divinity of Jesus, afterwards to attract all souls to Him and subject them to His sovereignty. He does this especially in holy Communion; in it He introduces Jesus into the full, entire and perfect possession of our hearts; He subjects all our powers to Him as to our King and Lord, for St. Paul says that no one can utter His name but by the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. XII, 3).

Come, almighty Spirit, give my soul to Jesus; make it the slave of His love, subject to His greatness, and always submissive to Him under Thy guidance.

III. POINT.

“He will glorify Me.” The Spirit of God is true God, and His testimony cannot be false; He glorified and manifested Jesus, as well by the power of the miracles, by which He proved and persuaded men of His divinity, as by the unction of grace and charity which He poured into the hearts of the believers, in which He imprinted and engraved His laws and commandments in characters of fire and love. Formerly they were written on tables of stone (Exod. XXXI, 18), and had often caused only death, because they were observed through servile fear: but the Holy Ghost, expelling from our hearts the servile fear of punishment (1 John IV, 18), substitutes love, which, stronger than death, enables us to obey with joy, rendering the commandments easy, because it lightens the yoke and makes it sweet by sanctifying it. Finally, the Holy Ghost enabled the apostles to know and love Jesus according to the spirit, and not according to the flesh; He animated them with a holy fervor to spread His name and His glory everywhere; and this is the effect of Christ’s prayer: “Father, glorify Thy Son” (John XVII, 1). It should also be the effect of ours: “Hallowed be Thy name” (Mat. VI, 9).

Friday after the Fourth Sunday after Easter.

Christ enters through suffering into glory.

I. POINT.

*“Ought not Christ to have suffered these things,
and so to enter into His glory?”*

(Luke XXIV, 26.)

It was necessary on the part of God, who had thus determined and ordained in His eternal Council; it was

necessary on the part of Jesus Christ, who wished for the glory of His Father to be "obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross (Phil. II, 8); it was necessary for love of us, in order to satisfy the rigor of divine justice for our sins, and that we might have a superabundant ransom, a price exceeding all our debts to God (Ps. CXXIX, 7); it was necessary even for the glory of our Lord; for it was thus suitable that He should enter into so great a glory, by such great sufferings and such inconceivable humiliations. It was suitable that He should possess this glory, not only by hereditary right, but also by the right of merit, and that it should be given to Him, not through a gratuitous liberality, but by equity and right of justice. O will, O profound counsel of God, which we ought to adore! Love, obedience, and exceeding greatness of the goodness of Jesus, which we ought to acknowledge, imitate and love! Admirable dispensation of the Eternal Wisdom for our salvation and the glory of Jesus, which are the two ends to which God has referred all that He has done, and which should also be the cause and the end of all our desires and all our actions!

II. POINT.

"It was necessary that Christ should suffer these things" (Luke XXIV, 46). Jesus suffered in every way, in His body, in His mind and in His heart; from His friends, from His enemies, even from His Father, until death; from the first instant of His conception till the moment when He expired on the Cross, in the midst of the most cruel sufferings, the most bitter outrages, the most profound humiliations. How attentively we should consider all these circumstances! Such is the way by which He entered into His glory. The way of His triumph was His Passion; scorn and opprobrium were the passage to His glory. If, then, we wish to be

glorified with Him, we must suffer and humble ourselves with Him, like Him and for Him.

III. POINT.

If Jesus entered by the Cross into possession of a glory which belonged to Him by the right of Sonship, how much more are we obliged to embrace the cross to attain to the same glory, which is not due to us as to Him, and which is acquired for us only by His merits! We must, then, "pass through many tribulations", after the example of the Saviour, "to reach the kingdom of heaven" (Acts XIV, 21). "Let no one be moved by all tribulations, by all the afflictions that come to us," says St. Paul, for to this we are called (Thess. III, 3). We must suffer in this world, in order to reign in the other; we are Christians that we may endure present evils, in the hope of future happiness. We sometimes wonder that good people are contradicted, exposed to envy and calumny, afflicted with diseases and infirmities; but it is because they are good, that God tries them in this manner; it is because He destines them to share the inheritance of Jesus Christ, to participate in His kingdom and His glory, that He makes them share the bitterness of His chalice. Jesus bore our Cross, He took upon Himself all the penalties due to our sins, to render our sufferings meritorious, so that, after having suffered with Him, we may be glorified and beatified with Him.

Saturday after the Fourth Sunday after Easter.

The world reproved by the Holy Ghost.

I. POINT.

"He shall convince the world of sin, because they have not believed in Me" (John XVI, 8).

The sin of infidelity is the source of all the others. This sin is more common than we think, because there

is very little true faith, very little faith living by charity and active in good works. Our Lord said: "When the Son of man shall come, think you He will find faith on earth?" (Luke XVIII, 8). Many flatter themselves that they have faith; but their actions and their manners contradict them. They believe in the Gospel, and their life is a continual opposition to it; they profess to serve God, and they serve only their passions, their interests and their self-love; they love and fear only the world; and although, according to the word of Jesus, "no man can serve two masters", they wish to unite the one service with the other, that of God with that of the world (Mat. VI, 24). This is not to believe in Jesus Christ. He who believes in Him is the just man who lives by faith (Heb. X, 38), that is, who lives and acts according to the maxims of faith, according to his belief, without allowing himself to be seduced or allured by the examples and deceitful maxims of the world. It is he, who remains firm and immovable, as if he saw the invisible (Heb. XI, 27), as St. Paul said of Moses.

II. POINT.

"The Comforter will convince the world of justice" (John XVI, 10). The Holy Ghost, says St. Augustine, will not reprove the world for the justice which will be practised there; but He will make use of the justice of the faith and holiness of His followers, to reproach the world for its injustice, its corruption, its infidelity. The justice of some will be the proof of the injustice and malice of the others. So, the same saint, to condemn his own cowardice, and to conquer the temptation which made virtue appear to him impossible, said to himself: Why can not I do, what others have done, what so many persons of both sexes, of all ages, of all conditions, have practised before me? Thus by the way

and the force of good example, far more efficacious than reproofs and remonstrances, we shall combat iniquity, condemn sin, furnish weapons to the Holy Ghost, and His judgments will be justified by our conduct.

III. POINT.

“The Holy Ghost will convince the world of judgment” (John XVI, 11). The world, that is, they who live by the spirit of the world, will be judged, condemned with the devil, who is the prince of the world, because they follow him and recognize him as their leader, imitating his pride, malice and disobedience. They who despise the salutary interior warnings of the Holy Ghost and the reprimands of His ministers, who have only a faith dead (James II, 26) and devoid of good works, who are wanting in the faith of the just which is animated by love, will be condemned, because they have only the faith of devils, a barren faith, useless for salvation, and they will be punished with them whose children they show themselves to be, since they do their works. Jesus said to the Jews: You are the children of the devil, and you do the works of your father. But if you boast of being “the children of Abraham, do the works of Abraham” (John VIII, 39). O Jesus, whom I believe, adore and love as my Lord and my true Father, Thou, from whom I hold my being and my life, according to nature and grace, enable me to do the works of my Father, grant that believing Thee, loving Thee, and imitating Thee, I may not be confounded and condemned with the world, but that I may be justified and saved by Thee, with Thy faithful servants, Thy beloved children!

Fifth Sunday after Easter.

Efficacy of prayer.

I. POINT.

“Amen I say unto you, if you ask anything of the Father in My name, He will give it to you.”

(John XVI, 23.)

This great and magnificent promise of Jesus, which He confirmed by His ordinary asseveration, “Amen I say unto you”, in order to inspire us with greater confidence, crowns all our desires and surpasses all our hopes. “If you ask anything”: Jesus says ‘anything’, He excepts nothing, and it is the first and supreme Truth, who speaks, who promises, who binds Himself, saying: “Amen I say unto you”. What, O Lord, if we ask of Thy Father Thy grace, Thy spirit, Thy love, will He give it to us? If we ask Thy kingdom, Thy eternal life, Thyself, will He give it to us? Who will not admire such inconceivable liberality! Who will not be moved by such great goodness! Who will not confide in so sweet and admirable a providence! Moreover, the expression ‘anything’ does not include bad, vain and useless things, but good and solid things, real goods; spiritual and divine things, temporal and eternal things, only inasmuch as they refer to the glory of God and our salvation. Jesus says: “Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all things shall be added unto you” (Mat. VI, 33). The prophet says: “What have I in heaven” besides Thee, O my God, “and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth” (Ps. LXXII, 25), but to possess Thee? Permit me, then, to go to Thee in Thy divine Sacrament; there give Thyself to me, O Jesus. I ask only for Thee, and with Thee nothing shall be wanting to me, for to me Thou art all things.

II. POINT.

“If you ask in My name.” To ask in the name of Jesus Christ, is to ask by His merits and by His virtue; so that upon His merits and on His virtue alone is founded our humble confidence that we shall be heard. The prayer which is not made through Him, which has no support outside of ourselves, not only does not efface sin, but becomes a sin itself, because it is rash and presumptuous. And where is the sinful man so bold as to venture to speak to God, and to present himself before Him, except in the name and under the auspices of this only and beloved Son, alone worthy to be heard for His own merit? (Heb. V, 7). To ask in His name, is to ask animated with His spirit, which, being communicated to us, “asks and prays” in us and “for us, with unspeakable groanings” (Rom. VIII, 26). When a prayer is formed in us by the spirit of Jesus, can it be rejected by God? Finally, to ask in His name, is to ask in the person of Jesus, as the priest does who represents Him, who is His minister and His organ, chiefly at the Altar. Jesus Christ, by his mouth, prays for us as our Sovereign Pontiff; He prays in us as our Head, and receives our prayers as our God. O Jesus, “save me in Thy name, and judge me in Thy strength” (Ps. LIII, 3). O my God, behold what my Saviour has done to merit Thy mercy for me, and refuse it not. If my faults and my sins render me unworthy of the mercy I implore, Thou knowest that His virtues have acquired it for me.

III. POINT.

“Hitherto you have asked nothing in My name: Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full” (John XVI, 24). The love of Jesus invites us, urges us, gently forces us to ask Him; He loves us, and by this love He desires more ardently to give, than we de-

sire to obtain. O liberality, bounty of the heart and love of Jesus, inexhaustible treasures of His goodness! He seems to have forgotten all that He has already given us, to inspire us with confidence, and to excite us to ask of Him again, and still more. "Ask and you shall receive." What is more easy and profitable to us, but also, what is more magnificent and more worthy of God, than to give without limit and without measure? "Ask, and you shall receive." It belongs only to God to give in this manner, and to give without expecting or receiving anything. Men are reserved in their gifts, because they are impoverished by giving: God, on the contrary, the inexhaustible source of all good, loses nothing by communicating it. O Jesus, Thou art He whom I desire, whom I wish for, whom I ask for above all, and more than all: give Thyself to me, that my joy may be full and perfect, according to Thy word.

Rogation Monday.

Defects in prayer.

I. POINT.

"Ask, and it shall be given to you."

(Luke XI, 9.)

Jesus, because of His own abundance, is urged to pour forth and to give to us; and we, because of our indigence, ought to be eager to ask and to receive from Him. Thus a mother desires as much to nurse her child, as the child desires to be nursed, because of its need. Jesus engages us, then, in many ways to have recourse to Him, and, at the same time, He teaches us the means to obtain from His goodness all that we need. He shows us the humility and perseverance which must accompany our prayers, by the example of a man who, in the night, knocks at the door of his neighbor, and

asks of him three loaves: he is not discouraged by the first refusal, he persists in knocking, and finally obtains them by his importunity (Luke XI, 8). Thus this kind Lord, this excellent friend, wishes to be compelled, above all in the night of tribulation and trial, by our importunity and our entreaties, to which He cannot refuse anything. O Lord, may I say to Thee with one of Thy faithful servants: "I will not leave Thee until Thou hast blessed me" (Gen. XXXII, 26). Our confidence rests on two infallible supports, the mercy of God, which is infinite and inexhaustible, and humble prayer which is always heard. The riches of mercy are founded on the goodness of God, and the efficacy of prayer upon His promises. Therefore David assures us that "God regardeth the prayer of the humble" (Ps. CI, 18), and he exclaims: "Blessed be God, who hath not turned away His mercy from me", and hath not rejected my prayer (Ps. LXV, 20). O Lord, who hast a horror of the poor, proud man (Eccli. XXV, 4), grant to me the gift of persevering, humble and submissive prayer.

II. POINT.

"Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find, knock, and it shall be opened to you" (Luke XI, 9). We ask by prayer, we seek by desires, we knock by good works. David said: I opened my mouth, and panted for Thy spirit (Ps. CXVIII, 131). God Himself says: "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it" (Ps. LXXX, 11), that is, pray, and I will satisfy your desires, I will surpass your hopes. The prayer of the mouth must be produced by the fervor of the heart; he, who prays, should be a Daniel, "a man of desires" (Dan. IX, 23). "Let my prayer, O Lord, be directed as incense in Thy sight" (Ps. CXL, 2), because prayer, in order to rise to God, should be impelled and animated

by the fire of charity; finally, it becomes efficacious by the work of the hands. Jeremiah says: "Let us lift our hearts with our hands to the Lord" (Lam. III, 41). When the Israelites fought against the Amalekites, Moses prayed; and when he lifted up his hands, Israel conquered; but when he let them down a little, Amalec overcame (Exod. XVII, 11); thus prayer must be sustained by the hands. Hence St. Paul wishes men to "pray everywhere, lifting up pure hands to heaven" (1 Tim. II, 8). The most excellent prayer is that of good works. To lift the hands is to refer all our actions to the glory of God by a right and pure intention; and he makes a good prayer, who does his actions well. O Jesus, kindle in me the fire of Thy holy love. "All my desire is before Thee" (Ps. XXXVII, 10); may all my works be for Thee alone!

III. POINT.

"Ask, and you shall receive" (John XVI, 24). If the promises of God are infallible, how is it that He so often refuses many things to those who pray to Him? The fault can come only from them. If we ask for good things, have we not rendered ourselves unworthy to receive them, "for God heareth not sinners" (John IX, 31), that is, those who love sin, and who commit it voluntarily. David said: "If I have looked at iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Ps. LXV, 18). We pray and we do not obtain, because we ask for evil things, or things which are not agreeable to God and conducive to salvation; our prayers have no effect, because we do not pray as we ought; we are wanting in faith, confidence and respect; we presume on ourselves, on our own merits, and we ask boldly, as for something due to us, that which we ought to ask for only trembling, as an alms, and with an humble and profound

conviction of our indigence and unworthiness; we do not say, but we ought to say with the prophet: I am indigent, "a beggar and poor" (Ps. XXXIX, 18). O God, help me; I expect nothing from myself, but only from Thy goodness; for, "if Thou, O Lord, wilt mark iniquities", who will dare not only to hope to obtain any favor, but who shall bear Thy presence? (Ps. CXXIX, 3). Sometimes we do not receive what we ask for, because the object of our petition is an obstacle to our greater good. God does not grant what we desire, in order to give us what we ought to desire; He refuses us a lesser good, in order to give us a greater. How useful, how necessary it is to pray, but in praying, we should commit all to the good pleasure of the Almighty, and leave the success to His providence and goodness! O Lord, do with Thy servant according to Thy mercy, that is sufficient for me.

Rogation Tuesday.

God's love for His elect.

I. POINT.

"If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give His good spirit to those who ask Him?" (Luke XI, 13.)

After having taught us to pray and to join to our words desires, fervor of heart and good works, for we must not separate these three things to obtain our petitions; our Lord Jesus Christ assures us of the goodness of His Father towards us, as the most solid foundation of our confidence. He makes use of a comparison so much the more touching, as it is more familiar; He shows us that God has a father's tenderness for us. He says: "As a father hath compassion on his children,

so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear Him" (Ps. CII, 13). Jesus is the sovereign and essential good; He seeks only to communicate Himself, He is all love and charity (1 John IV, 8); and therefore we ought to hope for everything from Him, and He will never refuse real goods to those who ask for them. O Jesus, pour into us the spirit of grace and prayer (Zach. XII, 10). May Thy spirit, O Lord, guide us in the right way (Ps. CXLII, 18). Strengthen us with the perfect spirit which the royal prophet asked of Thee (Ps. L, 14).

II. POINT.

"I say not that I will ask the Father for you; for the Father loveth you, because you have loved Me" (John XVI, 27). Jesus compares the time of His visible presence on earth with that of His absence, when He was to return to heaven. If now, you see Me praying for you, I exhort you to pray with Me, and I give you an assurance that you will obtain through Me, if you follow the same method, when I shall be no longer visible; though I should not pray to My Father for you, He loves you so tenderly, and His heart full of love for you is so ready to do you good, that of Himself He will grant you all that you ask. He loves you, because you have loved Me. The Father loves all who love His Son; He honors those who honor Him. Zeal for the glory of Jesus, and an ardent love for Him, are two wings which lift up our prayers and our desires, and bear them to the throne of the Father, who delights to load with graces the adorers of His beloved Son, How desirable it is to love Jesus, since without this love we cannot be loved nor favorably regarded by the Father. Love is the recompense of love; let us love, if we wish to be loved. What is sweeter than to love Him, who

first loved us (1 John IV, 10), whose love alone can render us happy, and who is the true source of all good!

III. POINT.

If God, through the mere motion of His goodness, is so liberal to those who love His Son, what will He be when this same Son shall appear before the face of His Father, with His glorified Body marked with five wounds, which He will bear, not only as the rich ornaments of His triumph, but as the glorious titles of our reconciliation with Him! Brilliant and precious scars which He will show unceasingly, as a proof that He has become our Mediator (1 Tim. II, 5). He will not plead our cause by the way of recommendation and favor, as the saints do, but by the right of His merits, and of that abundant redemption, by which He has saved us, and acquired for us the eternal inheritance (Ps. CXXIX, 7). O Jesus, praying and pleading for us sinners by an all-powerful mediation, make us just and faithful, render us worthy to be heard; and as formerly Jacob stole his father's blessing (Gen. XXVII, 28), because he had clothed himself with the garments and likeness of his elder brother, grant, Lord, Thou who hast vouchsafed to call and adopt us as Thy brethren, that, clothed with Thy divine merits and Thy virtues, we may obtain mercy and the blessing of Thy heavenly Father at the last day.

Wednesday.

Eve of the Ascension.

I. POINT.

“Why hath He ascended, if not because He first descended into the lower parts of the earth?” (Eph. IV, 9.)

The abasement of Jesus was the foundation of His elevation; His ignominies were the steps and the prepa-

ration for His glory. When He is ready to ascend to heaven, the angels exclaim: "Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O ye eternal gates", which hitherto have been closed to men; be ye lifted up and "the King of glory shall enter in; but who is this King of glory? The Lord, who is strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle, the Lord of hosts" (Ps. XXIII, 8). It is because He is mighty in battle, and the Lord of hosts, that He is recognized as King of glory; for it is by combating that He has won the victory; it is by His humility that He has merited to be exalted, by the opprobrium of the Cross that He has entered into His glory. Only those who have shared in His humiliations are permitted to share in His triumphs, and His elevation repeats to us eloquently the words which He pronounced more than once: "He that humbleth himself, shall be exalted" (Mat. XXIII, 12).

II. POINT.

St. Paul mentions four states of abasement to which Jesus humbled Himself, and four other states of elevation and greatness; the first are expressed in four words: "He emptied Himself; He humbled Himself; He became obedient even to the death of the Cross" (Phil. II, 7); "He descended into the lowest parts of the earth" (Eph. IV, 9). These four profound and inconceivable abasements have all been recompensed by the Father, as the same apostle teaches us: Because He humbled Himself, "God hath exalted Him and given Him a name, which is above all names"; because "He obeyed even to the death of the Cross", God hath ordained that "every knee should bend before Him, in heaven, on earth and under the earth" (Phil. II, 10); and because He descended, God His Father glorified Him and placed Him at His right hand on the throne

of His majesty (Phil. II, 11). Happy humiliations, which have been so worthily exalted and so justly recompensed! Let us humble ourselves with Jesus, let us become obedient with Him, let us descend with Him, if we wish to have a share in His elevation and His glory! If we do not die with Him, we may not hope to rise again, to live, to triumph with Him. The Holy Ghost says: "Acceptable men (are tried) in the furnace of humiliation" (Eccli. II, 5).

III. POINT.

"He, who descended, is the same who ascended above all the heavens" (Eph. IV, 10). As the depth of the foundation is proportioned to the height to be given to the edifice, so the humiliations of the Man-God were the measure of His elevation and greatness. He descended to the lowest parts of the earth, and therefore He is exalted to the summit of the holy mountains above all the heavens: thus the sovereign equity of God will give to each one according to his merits, with just proportion. The Holy Ghost says: "The mighty shall be mightily tormented" (Wis. VI, 7). "By what things a man sinneth, by the same also he is tormented" (Wis. XI, 17); he will be punished "according to his works" (Apoc. XVIII, 6); his torment and his suffering shall be in proportion to his pride and his sinful pleasures. Abraham said to the wicked rich man: "Remember that thou didst receive good things in thy life-time, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented (Luke XVI, 25). Let the just man rejoice, because, if he suffers for a time, joy will soon be restored to him. "Let him who will be great among you, become the least" (Luke XXII, 26), for he who humbles himself and makes himself little, shall be the greatest in the kingdom of

heaven (Mat. XVIII, 1). "The servant is not greater than his Lord" (John XIII, 16). If Jesus ascended to His glory by the steps of the most profound humiliations, would we, or could we without temerity, and without a guilty presumption, hope to reach it by any other way? O Lord, may I humble myself with Thee, that I may follow Thee in Thy abasements, and merit to follow Thee in Thy glory!

Thursday.

The Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I. POINT.

"Jesus, lifting up His hands, blessed them."

(Luke XXIV, 50.)

As formerly the patriarchs, before dying, blessed their children, and as a good christian father, about to die or starting on a long journey, blesses his whole family, so Jesus, ready to return to heaven, gives His blessing to His beloved disciples, and, in their person, to the whole Church which they then formed. He blessed them with words of prayer to His Father; He blessed them with the salutary sign of the Cross according to St. Gregory, and by the lifting up of His sacred hands, full of graces, and pierced to pour them forth more abundantly; He blessed them efficaciously, filling their hearts with light, love, joy, and the consolation of the Holy Ghost, strengthening them in the faith and inspiring them with new fervor. O Jesus, equally powerful in works and in words, give me a share in this last benediction granted to Thy disciples. When possessing Thee in holy Communion, may I say to Thee with Jacob: "Lord, I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me" (Gen. XXXII, 26). Extend over me those sacred hands which Thou didst lift for me upon the

Cross, and which on this day Thou dost raise to heaven; those hands in which the Father has placed all things, in which Thou dost carry Thy sheep, that they may never perish. May these divine hands sustain me always; may no one snatch me from them! Open them now, O Lord, to fill me with Thy blessings and Thy graces (Ps. CXLIV, 16).

II. POINT.

“Blessing them, He rose up into heaven” (Luke XXIV, 51). The blessed moment has arrived. Jesus said to His Father: The hour has come, glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son may glorify Thee (John XVII, 1). “Glorify Me with the glory which I had in Thee before the world was made.” Jesus asks that the glory which He had in God, as God, may be communicated to Him as man; that His humanity may be clothed with it and participate in it: a prayer worthy to be heard; for it belongs to Thee, O Jesus, to receive “divinity, wisdom, honor and benediction”, not only from men, but from God Thy Father. On this day especially, and by this mystery, the prayer and the just desire of Jesus are accomplished, when He is lifted up to the highest heavens, and established on the throne of His glory at the right hand of God. Jesus asks this glory in reference to that of His Father. As all the steps, all the thoughts, all the motions, all the moments of His life had no other object than to render Him homage according to these words: “I honor My Father, and I seek not My own glory” (John VIII, 50). He refers to Him also the glory of His Ascension and His triumph in heaven. O Lord, may it please Thee to cast into my soul a little spark of the zeal with which Thou Thyself dost burn, that I may never seek my own glory, but may consume myself for Thine.

III. POINT.

“He rose up into heaven”; and the choirs of angels accompanied His triumph; they vied with each other in singing the praises of the Conqueror of death. They said: God has ascended amid acclamations of joy: “Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered” (Ps. LXVII, 2). Then addressing themselves to Him: “Arise, O Lord, into Thy resting place; Thou and the ark which Thou hast sanctified” (Ps. CXXXI, 8), that is, Thy holy and glorious humanity. There were the twelve legions of angels, of whom Jesus spoke in His Passion, and all who had the honor of serving Him during His mortal life; there was the chariot or throne of God, composed of ten thousand blessed spirits; thousands of angels rejoiced with holy transports, and the Lord was borne gloriously through the midst of them (Ps. LXVII, 18), not by them but by His own power and virtue, to the right hand of the majesty of God; for He ascended not only above the material heavens, but above the spiritual heavens, above the heavenly spirits and all creatures. Behold “the Lord is in His holy temple: the Lord’s throne is in heaven” (Ps. X, 5). We give Thee thanks, O Jesus, we rejoice at Thy great glory. O Lord, lift up with Thee our hearts, our thoughts and our desires into heaven. Henceforth let there be nothing for us upon earth; may our eyes be raised unceasingly to Thee, O Lord, “who dwellest in the heavens”! (Ps. CXXII, 1).

Friday after the Ascension.

Christ’s gifts to man.

I. POINT.

*“The Lord Jesus was taken up into heaven, where
He is seated at the right hand of God.”*

(Mark XVI, 19.)

He to whom joy was offered, but who chose to

suffer the Cross and despised the shame, is now seated at the right hand of God (Heb. XII, 2); for if the Cross was the end of the humiliations and sufferings of Jesus, the right hand of the Father was the end and the supreme degree of His elevation and greatness. He said during His mortal life: "The Father is greater than I" (John XIV, 28). In fact, the Father had treated Him as a servant and a slave; but now He receives Him, regards Him and treats Him as His Son. To-day "the Lord said to my Lord: Sit Thou at My right hand" (Ps. CIX, 1). St. Paul says: God has not only raised us to life, but He has made us sit with Jesus in heaven (Eph. II, 6). Yet Jesus assures us that no one had ascended into heaven, but he who first descended from heaven (John III, 13). No one, then, can ascend but Jesus Christ, since He alone has descended. St. Augustine says: Strive to be a member of Jesus Christ, if you wish to ascend with Him to heaven; for wherever the head is, there also are the members. Let us never separate from the mystical Body of Jesus Christ; He is still suffering on earth: let us participate in His sufferings, if we wish to be reunited in heaven to our divine and glorious Head.

II. POINT.

On this day the soul of Jesus is filled with joy and delight, in proportion to the suffering and anguish which had overwhelmed Him in His Passion. He sees in the glory of His triumph the abundant fruit of His labors. And could not Jesus say, as Jacob formerly said: "I have passed over the Jordan alone with my staff, and now I return with two companies" (Gen. XXXII, 10). I have suffered, "I have trodden the wine-press alone, and no one came to help Me" (Is. LXIII, 3); with the staff of My Cross I have passed through the river of

affliction and suffering; I have finished the course of My mortal life; now I return to My Father, accompanied by angels on one side, who descend from heaven in numbers to meet Me, and on the other by men, that innumerable multitude of just, who from the creation of the world have sighed in the expectation of their Saviour in the prison of Limbo. St. Paul says: "He led captivity captive" (Eph. IV, 8). He delivered the saints, He broke their chains and set them at liberty; but the divine Conqueror has fastened them to the car of His triumph to bring them with Him to-day as His glorious conquests, and to make them enter heaven into the joy of their Lord (Mat. XXV, 23). O Jesus, my sovereign deliverer, break the bonds of sin which hold me captive, and load me with the salutary chains of Thy holy love. May these chains draw me from earth, that I may ascend with Thee to heaven!

III. POINT.

"The Lord ascending to heaven, gave gifts to men" (Eph. IV, 8). What are these gifts which Jesus, ascending to heaven, bestowed upon us? They are the examples of His mortal life. Upon earth Jesus led a life always painful, always laborious, always suffering. This life is the precious inheritance which He has left to us, and which He wishes us to take for the model of ours. Elias, when taken up into heaven in a fiery chariot, let fall his mantle, and Eliseus, who had been unwilling to lose sight of his beloved master, picked it up, and was immediately filled with his double spirit (4 Kings II, 12); thus Jesus, leaving the earth, bequeathed to it the inheritance of His mortality, His actions, His virtues, His sufferings and, above all, His humiliations. It remains for us to gather them up; and if we gather them with care, his double spirit will rest on us. We shall do

what He did; we shall esteem what He esteemed, we shall love to suffer as He did; and because His crucified life was the seed of His eternal rest, the Cross which we will embrace after His example, will procure for us the same rest. O my Saviour, may my life represent Thine in time, that I may merit to be glorified with Thee in eternity.

Saturday after the Ascension.

The Blessed Virgin at the Ascension.

I. POINT.

While the disciples were looking at Jesus, He was taken up into heaven. (Acts I, 9.)

How great was the joy of His most holy Mother, when she saw the blessed fruit of her womb taken up gloriously into heaven! Her joy corresponded to her love, and as her love for Jesus was greater than that of all the angels and saints, her joy also was greater than theirs. Jesus said to His apostles: "If you loved Me, you would be glad, because I go to the Father" (John XIV, 28). The perfect love of Mary rendered her joy unequalled and beyond our conception or expression. Do we love Jesus as we ought, more than ourselves, purely for His own sake, and not for our own? If we do, we shall rejoice in His glory, in His triumph and His joy, still more than in that which we hope to receive from Him. His happiness will be ours, and amid the pains of our mortal pilgrimage the sweet remembrance of His felicity will be for us a resource, a consolation, a motive of patience; finally, we shall esteem no blessing, no glory, we shall enjoy no pleasure, if we do not find in it the honor and glory of Jesus. O Blessed Virgin, pour upon us the abundance of Thy love and of that holy joy, which is its fruit.

II. POINT.

Mary, moved by the natural inclination of a tender mother, and still more by the supernatural dispositions of the Mother of God, had an ardent desire to leave the earth, and to be separated from her body, to follow her Son into heaven; but it was necessary that she should remain here below, for the good of the infant Church, for its edification and development. As she had, at the foot of the Cross, offered to God her only and beloved Son, she now sacrifices to Him, with the same spirit, her earnest and most just desire to be re-united to Him. O joy of Mary, steeped in the tears of her sorrow, when she saw herself separated from the only object of her love. Yet with whatever sorrow this joy was mingled, it was pure, tranquil and sincere; for Mary counting her own interests as nothing, forgets them willingly for those of her Son, and as she loved her Son inconceivably more than herself, she was more moved by His happiness than by the pain which she felt in being deprived of Him. May we be permitted to groan with Mary, like the royal prophet, over the length of our exile (Ps. CXIX, 5), and the misery of our banishment from Jesus. Let us imitate the perfect submission of the Mother of God; like her, let us sacrifice to the glory of Jesus our most favorite desires and our most cherished inclinations.

III. POINT.

“They were persevering with one mind in prayer with . . . Mary, the Mother of Jesus” (Acts I, 14). The spirit of prayer was the first fruit of the Ascension of Jesus, and one of the precious gifts which He left to His Church when ascending to heaven; a gift which merited, and was the preparation for all the others, especially that most excellent gift, the communication

of the Holy Ghost. Jesus had commanded His disciples to wait for Him in retreat, until they were clothed with power from on high. Obeying His word, they waited for Him with patience, according to the counsel of the prophet: "It is good to wait in silence for the salvation of God" (Lam. III, 26). They were recollected, praying with Mary, the Mother and protectress of this holy assembly, by the secret influences of grace, which she drew upon them, and by the efficacy of her intercession. How excellent were her dispositions during these ten days! Let us endeavor to participate in them by retreat and interior recollection, separating ourselves from the noise and cares of earth, to pray and to converse with Jesus alone in heaven, by the union of one same spirit, always submissive to that of Jesus, and to His holy will. O Blessed Virgin, receive us into thy company. Give us an entrance into this divine sanctuary, that our desires and our prayers being united to thine, we may attract the Holy Ghost and receive Him abundantly.

Sixth Sunday after Easter.

Prudence and vigilance in prayer.

I. POINT.

"Be prudent and watch in prayer" (1 Pet. IV, 7).

The Church preparing her children to receive the Holy Ghost, exhorts them to continual prayer and teaches them by the Prince of the apostles the dispositions which should accompany it. He says: "Be prudent", let not your prayer be indiscreet or rash, but wise and circumspect. The psalmist adds: Sing psalms, praise, pray to the Lord, "but wisely" (Ps. XLVI, 8). What do all these expressions signify, this wisdom, this circumspection, but that when we pray, we should think seriously, to whom we are addressing our petitions, be-

fore whom we appear, the greatness and the goodness of the God whom we invoke? It is He, whom the Seraphim praise with us, in whose presence, filled with fear and respect, they tremble, and cover themselves with their wings (Is. VI, 2). Let us not dishonor such a Lord; let us not render our prayers unworthy of Him by the instability of our thoughts and the fickleness of our mind; let us not offend His goodness by the hardness, the impenitence, the coldness and the levity of our hearts; let us avoid the reproach which God addressed to the Jews: "These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me" (Is. XXIX, 13). Let us pray wisely, with attention, fervor, respect, fear and love. O Lord, who dost order us to pray, grant that, praying to Thee in spirit and in truth, we may merit to receive the Spirit of Truth.

II. POINT.

Be vigilant in prayer. It is not without reason, that St. Peter wishes us to watch in prayer. Nothing is more terrible to our enemies than this vigilance, and nothing is more dangerous for us than indifference and sloth in prayer: drowsy and languid prayer cannot rise to God. The prayer of him who prays only with the tongue, is fruitless; therefore let us watch. This vigilance should extend to all the motions of our hearts, lest they should contract stains which would render our prayers useless and ineffectual. St. Paul says: "Let him that calls on the name of the Lord, depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. II, 19). "They shall call upon Me, and I will not hear them, because they hate justice" (Prov. I, 28). Your sins are as a cloud which you have placed before you, and which prevents your prayer from passing (Lam. III, 44). "If our heart do not reprehend us" (1 John III, 21), we are sure of obtaining from

God all that we ask. Let us, then, watch and pray, let us not separate these two things, which the sovereign Master has Himself joined together: "Watch and pray" (Mat. XXVI, 41).

III. POINT.

Be vigilant in prayer. To watch without prayer is to rely on our own strength, this is presumption: "Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it" (Ps. CXXVI, 1). Let us watch as if all depended on our vigilance; but let us pray with an humble conviction, that we ought not to expect anything except from the pure goodness of God. He excites us to pray, He inspires what to ask, and He gives us the grace necessary to obtain. He must bow down and bend to us, He must pray in us and by us, that we may receive; for He distributes His gifts only to those who pray to Him in this manner; by His motion, and relying upon the assistance of His grace. O Jesus, who dost pray for us unceasingly to Thy Father, enable us to pray by Thee and with Thee. O divine Spirit, since prayer is not a work in the power of man, but a favor of Thy mercy, grant me the gift of prayer, that, according to the warning of Jesus, I may always pray, if not by an actual application of the mind, at least by desires, actions and continual good works. Come, Holy Ghost, establish these dispositions in my soul, that I may be found worthy to be filled with Thee, guided and consoled by Thee.

Monday after the Sixth Sunday after Easter.

The Ascension of Christ strengthens our faith.

I. POINT.

Jesus "was carried up to heaven".

(Luke XXIV, 51.)

The three theological virtues are confirmed and

animated by Christ's glorious Ascension. St. Leo says: It is the strength of great minds, it is the light of faithful souls to believe without hesitation, what the senses cannot perceive. It increases the merit of our faith to adore Jesus on the altar, although we know that He has ascended to heaven, and is seated at the right hand of His Father. Jesus Christ said, when speaking of the Eucharist: "Doth this scandalize you? If then, you shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before" (John VI, 62). As if He had said: When I shall have ascended to heaven, and shall be hidden from your eyes, then it will be time to exercise your faith still more, believing what you shall no longer see; then not seeing Me nor hearing Me as at present, you will see and contemplate unceasingly that which is not seen here below. St. Paul says: Let us not look "at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things that are seen, are temporal," passing away with time; "the things that are not seen, are eternal" (2 Cor. IV, 18); they will never perish. Let the earthly man think and speak of earth, since he is earthly (John III, 31); but let the heavenly man judge, speak and think according to faith, according to Jesus Christ, despising the things of the world in order to rise to heaven with Him. O Jesus, strengthen my faith, enable me to speak, act and live according to faith.

II. POINT.

Our hopes are also lifted up with Jesus; for if the members must be inseparable from their head, shall we not hope to be one day participators in the glory of Jesus, our divine Head? We ought to remember that He ascended before us, to prepare the way (Mich. II, 13), as the prophet Micheas says; and our Lord Himself says: "I go to prepare a place for you" (John

XIV, 2). O goodness of Jesus, immense charity! All that He undertook, did and suffered here below, was for us; and if He re-ascended to heaven, it was also for us. He assures us that He went to prepare for us a permanent abode, that we might dwell there eternally with Him, to share His glory and happiness, if, as St. Paul says, we are found to have been conformed to Him in His sufferings and death (Rom. VIII, 29). Ought we not to regard heaven as our true country; ought we not to live there in anticipation, directing to it all our desires, and, according to the exhortation of St. Paul, seeking the things above and not the things of earth? (Col. III, 2). O Jesus, "draw me, and we will run after Thee" (Cant. I, 3). I will run, not by myself alone, but by Thy grace in me (1 Cor. XV, 10). Thy grace will bear me up, and with it I shall rise to Thee.

III. POINT.

Our charity is animated and our love purified by the Ascension of Jesus; for, if our heart and our love cannot but be where our treasure is (Mat. VI, 21), our affections should no longer grovel here below, since Jesus has departed from this world. We should lift them all to heaven (Col. III, 1), to Him who is all our good, our riches and our treasure. We ought not only to seek by hope, but to relish through love, not that which is upon earth (Heb. IV, 14), but that which is in heaven, the only and supreme object of our love, "who hath penetrated the heavens", and who is triumphant in the glory of God His Father. We are already in heaven, as regards the best part of ourselves, in Jesus our Head. Only what is lowest and most worthless in us, is still on earth; therefore let us despise its prosperity and its adversity, alike unworthy of our affection and our fear. With holy pride let us direct our aspira-

tions, our desires and our love to the eternal kingdom, where Jesus, the King and Spouse of our souls, awaits us and invites us to follow Him this day.

Tuesday after the Sixth Sunday after Easter.

The Ascension, a joyous mystery.

I. POINT.

"The Lord Jesus was carried up into heaven."

(Luke XXIV, 51.)

This is the solemn and universal festival of heaven and of earth, of God, of the angels and of men. On this day the Blessed Trinity receives, by the entrance of the Man-God into heaven, the greatest and most worthy glory that had ever been offered. Hitherto Jesus Christ had remained upon earth, and through Him, before His Ascension, earth rendered to God incomparably more honor and more worthy homage than all the angels of heaven, or any creature, however perfect, could render to Him throughout the boundless extent of eternity. But on this day Jesus seems to give to heaven what is proper to it, power to glorify God worthily; He begins to adore Him in that august sanctuary, with an adoration infinite in dignity, and to love Him with a love above all created loves, however holy, however ardent, however perfect they may be. O new glory in glory itself! O great God, who canst not be worthily adored, loved and praised by Thy weak creatures, grant that I may unite myself to my Saviour, and that through Him I may adore Thee, praise Thee and love Thee now and throughout all eternity!

II. POINT.

The mystery of the Ascension is properly the feast of our Lord: in all the other feasts, we see only our weaknesses, our infirmities and our miseries joined to

opprobrium, humiliations, sufferings and death. All these things are the accompaniments, the just punishment of our sins: all these were foreign to Jesus Christ; but He chose to be clothed with them, He wished to endure them, in order to deliver us from them. Even after His resurrection, He still remained a pilgrim among us, exiled from His kingdom; but on this day He enters it triumphant, victorious, and "all God", according to the expression of St. Ambrose and St. Augustine. He ascends into heaven, and takes possession forever of the glory that belongs to Him by so many titles. He is established on the throne of the majesty of God, He appears not only as God and Redeemer, but as the true Restorer of human nature; and after having snatched from the devil the prey which this cruel monster expected to devour, He ascends into the heavenly paradise, taking with Him the first Adam, who had been expelled from the earthly paradise. Let us rejoice this day in the happiness of Him, who has so loved us; and with sentiments of ardent love and tender gratitude, let us enter spiritually into the joy of our Lord.

III. POINT.

The Ascension is a feast of both angels and men. The angels were filled with an inexpressible and new delight, beholding their King and Saviour triumphant and glorious; they rejoice in being subjected to His peaceful reign, and sing: "This is God, our God unto eternity. . . . He shall rule us for evermore (Ps. XLVII, 15). He is the Lord of the universe, God has appointed Him over all the powers, over the principalities, the dominations, the virtues, and "He hath subjected all things under His feet" (Eph. I, 22). This day is also the consummation of the glory of the saints; to-day the heavenly Jerusalem is re-built and re-peopled with new

inhabitants: the fallen angels had left their seats vacant; to-day they are occupied by the just of the Old Law, who enter with their divine deliverer into heaven, formerly pre-figured by the promised land, flowing with milk and honey (Deut. XXVI, 9). The Ascension is a festival for us: our august Head, followed by our ancestors, walks before us; let us endeavor to overtake them, and tread in their steps; let us suffer, obey, and humble ourselves with them, for how can proud men ascend where proud and disobedient angels could not remain? Their revolt precipitated them from the highest pinnacle of glory to the lowest depths of hell: such will be the fate of those who imitate them. O what a subject of fear!

Wednesday after the Sixth Sunday after Easter.

We ought to follow Christ into heaven.

I. POINT.

While the disciples were looking at Him, "He was carried up to heaven" (Luke XXIV, 51).

Although all the moments of our Saviour's life are worthy of our adoration, we honor with peculiar respect the hour of His birth, the first instant of His entrance into this world: in like manner, we honor the last step of the divine Messiah on earth, the print of which He left on the spot from which He ascended to heaven. These venerable foot-prints have not been effaced during so many ages, and thousands of pilgrims hasten to press them with their lips. There He is to be adored, according to the prophecy: "We will adore the prints of His feet" (Ps. XCVIII, 5); there also the apostles adored Him visibly for the last time, and there we must hasten to adore Him, honoring that precious moment, when He ceased to dwell here below, to become the

citizen and King of heaven. His disciples looked up attentively at Him, following Him with their eyes and hearts, since they were unable to follow Him otherwise, until "a cloud hid Him from their sight" (Acts I, 9). This separation, which must have been so painful to them, filled them at the same time with grace and happiness; for Jesus, leaving them corporally, imprinted Himself more deeply in their hearts, when the cloud which received Him, and which symbolized both the obscurity and the certainty of faith, hid from them the sensible vision of the humanity of the Saviour, hitherto enjoyed by them. With them let us follow Him with our desires; with Jesus let us ascend spiritually to heaven, and, as it is written of Enoch, that "he walked with God, and was seen no more, because God took him" (Gen. V, 24), let us disappear here below, let us forget what is transitory, to follow Jesus glorious and to be occupied with Him alone. As Elias was snatched away in a fiery chariot (4 Kings II, 11), a symbol of the ravishing of our will by the sacred fire of love, so let all our affections be directed with ardor to Thee in heaven, O Jesus, the only worthy object of our attachment and our love.

II. POINT.

"Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven? This Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come as you have seen Him going into heaven" (Acts I, 11). The apostles by these words, which were as a flash of light to them, knew the mystery of the last coming of Jesus: that it would be He, who, in His human form and glorious body, would come to judge the universe, and who, in this same form, under which He had been wickedly judged, condemned and crucified, and in which He had ascended glorious to heaven, would come to judge His judges and to reign

over the whole world. They understood these words: "The Father hath given all power to His Son to judge, because He is the Son of man" (John V, 27). It is the prerogative of him who judges and reigns, to be seated; therefore Jesus is seated at the right hand of God, where He begins His judgment, and He will come and appear seated on the throne of His majesty to confirm His decrees and to pronounce them publicly. O Jesus, who, seated at the right hand of Thy Father, dost enter to-day upon the full exercise of Thy supreme authority, to judge the living and the dead, enter not into judgment with me (Ps. CXLII, 2); enable me to live in such a manner, that, fearing Thy judgment, I may desire it still more for Thy glory, and that I may rejoice with Thy saints in the expectation of Thy triumphant and glorious advent.

III. POINT.

There are two points in the Ascension of Jesus: the earth, whence He departs, and heaven, whither He goes. At the same time there are two last looks: one on men, whom He leaves here below; the other on His Father, who receives Him at His right hand. From the throne of His glory He looks continually on His Church, ruling it by His spirit, preserving it by His assistance, enlightening and sanctifying it by His graces. There Jesus looks on those who invoke Him, who labor or who suffer in His name. St. Stephen, when dying for the faith, said: "I see the heavens open, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God" (Acts VII, 55). The Lord, says David, has taken His place in heaven (Ps. X, 5); "His eyes look on the poor." Jesus looks on each of our souls individually, protecting them by His mercy, and producing in them various effects of grace. Finally, as King and Lord of all, He

exercises His power over all, over angels and devils, keeping them all dependent on and subject to His authority; over angels and men, requiring their love and voluntary submission; over the devils by compulsion and necessity. O Jesus, reign over me, I submit to Thy empire and I glory in being subject to Thee. Jesus becomes our Pontiff and our Advocate with His Father; "He entered once into the Holy of holies" (Heb. IX, 12), not that which was made by the hand of man, but He penetrated the highest heavens; there, as Eternal Priest and always living (Heb. VII, 25), He offers Himself unceasingly for us poor sinners, and is our Mediator to obtain the pardon of our sins, and to reconcile us with God. O Jesus, who, from the height of Thy glory, dost vouchsafe to look upon me, and to pray for me, grant that I also may look up to Thee, and may unite myself to Thee through love and gratitude.

Thursday after the Sixth Sunday after Easter.

"Our conversation is in heaven."

I. POINT.

"God hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly place through Jesus Christ."
(Eph. II, 6.)

St. Paul, explaining the mystery of our redemption, says that God gave us life through Jesus Christ, when we were dead by sin; that He raised us up with Him, communicating to us a new life; and that, finally, He made us ascend to heaven with Him, or in Him, because He is our Head, and we are His members (1 Cor. VI, 15). Jesus Christ, having become man, left nothing undone for the salvation of men. His whole life was a continual instruction for us; we should, therefore, imitate Him in all things. "I will follow Thee, O Lord, where-

soever Thou shalt go" (Mat. VIII, 19), even into heaven. But how can we ascend thither, whilst we are so attached to earthly things, and so weighed down by our sins? (Heb. XII, 1). St. Paul says: Let us lay aside the burden of our passions, let us free ourselves from the load of sin which weighs us down, that we may be able to rise with Jesus. St. Augustine observes that all creatures are exhorted to praise God; but it is not said that the passions of man praise Him, because even the least creatures are works of God, whilst pride, avarice, the irregularity of the passions, are the work of man. If, then, these vices cannot praise God, how much less can they ascend with Jesus Christ to heaven! We must crush them and, by destroying them, merit grace; Jesus says: "The water that I will give you, will become in you a fountain of living water springing forth into life everlasting" (John IV, 14). The water of grace which Jesus pours upon us from heaven, re-ascends, and, by its force, bears us upward to its source in heaven. O Lord, give us this water (John IV, 15). Blessed is the man whom Thou dost sustain with Thy grace, and who is faithful to grace "in this vale of tears; he will dispose steps in his heart" (Ps. LXXXIII, 6) to ascend to Thee, by Thee and with Thee into heaven.

II. POINT.

It is not enough to follow Jesus, to ascend after Him into heaven, we ought to dwell there always. Our life, "our conversation is in heaven" (Phil. III, 20). It seems that man should be like the angels; but is it difficult for him to live and converse in heaven, who is himself a heaven? Heaven is the temple of God, and the apostle says: "You" also "are His temple". God has His throne in heaven, and the soul of the just man is the throne of God. But we become both in a singular

and admirable manner in holy Communion: in it is verified this great saying of God Himself: "I will dwell in them" (2 Cor. VI, 16), and I will converse with them. Why, then, do we cling to earth? Why do we allow ourselves to be bound by so many ties, by so many low and unworthy interests, to which we attach ourselves, and which fetter the wings of our soul, as a cord which prevents us from flying to heaven? "Who will give me the wings of a dove" (Ps. LIV, 7) to fly away and escape the vain amusements of earth, that I may converse with Thee alone, O my God, in that blessed city, that holy city, of which Thou art the Founder and Builder (Heb. XI, 10). From the shore of this stormy sea may I rise to Thee, may I behold Thee, may I speak to Thee, may my desires and my thoughts be directed unceasingly to Thee, and amid the angry waves of the trials and temptations of this miserable life, may my soul and my spirit find repose and peace with Thee at the altar and in heaven!

III. POINT.

"Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. III, 20). According to St. Paul, the continual expectation of Jesus Christ is the proper state of the Christian. We ought always to have as the object of our thoughts Jesus ascended into heaven, and for our desire Jesus descending from heaven, surrounded with His glory. The justice of the Jews consisted in expecting and desiring His first coming; that of Christians consists in preparing for His second coming, as He Himself explains and orders: "Gird your loins; have in your hands burning lamps," which means, be pure and chaste, walk by faith, act by its light, and be guided by charity. Be like men waiting for their Master, ready to open the

door, when He shall knock (Luke XII, 36). This waiting for Jesus Christ enables the faithful to despise the riches and greatness of the world: and how can he value them who is waiting for the Saviour, and who hopes to reign with Him in glory? This expectation renders him invincible in combats: "Wait for the Lord", said David, "and let thy heart take courage" (Ps. XXVI, 14). It is the foundation of his constancy; he knows that the fleeting moments of this life of tribulation will merit for him eternal glory (2 Cor. IV, 17). He relies upon the promise of Him, who said: "I come quickly, and My reward is with Me" (Apoc. XXII, 12). This expectation is the strength of the martyrs in their torments, the magnanimity of the saints in their most severe contradictions. O Jesus, may the future goods which I expect from Thee, and which are the possession of Thyself, be always present to me as to them, that I may suffer with joy the afflictions and trials which will enable me one day to reign with Thee in eternity.

Friday after the Sixth Sunday after Easter.

The apostles after the Ascension.

I. POINT.

"They returned with joy, praising and blessing God."
(Luke XXIV, 52.)

The joy which filled the hearts of the apostles and disciples of the Saviour after His Ascension, was the first fruit and an anticipated gift of the Holy Ghost, with whom they were already filled interiorly, although they had not yet received Him exteriorly, and in all His fulness. Animated by the vivifying breath of His grace, they praised and blessed God, day and night, for all the benefits which they had received from Him through our Lord Jesus Christ. They conversed on these sweet re-

collections, gatnered together, and recalled to their memory the mysteries of His life, the words that had fallen from His divine lips, His holy and salutary instructions, His virtues, His miracles, His actions and His sufferings: this was the occupation of their minds and the ordinary subject of their conversation; they remembered His words: "I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you" (John XIV, 18); they rejoiced in the hope of soon seeing triumphant and glorious Him, whom heaven had taken from them. O Jesus, may the recollection of Thy life, may the remembrance of the great mercy, which induced Thee to do and suffer so many and so great hardships for my salvation, never be effaced from my memory. Give me Thy Holy Spirit, to enable me to recognize Thy goodness and thank Thee worthily.

II. POINT.

The remembrance of the graces and examples of Jesus produced in the hearts of the disciples a lively sorrow and a bitter compunction for having hitherto profited so little by the advantages and favors which they had received from Him; they grieved at having been so imperfect in the very school of perfection; they blushed for having performed the holiest actions in a manner entirely human, and comprehended so little, and practised still less, the maxims of their Master, disputed for the first places, loved precedency and sought their own selfish interests. In fact, their attachment to His Person and their love for Him were so imperfect, so little worthy of God, that Jesus Christ found them an obstacle to the coming of the Holy Ghost. Therefore, to-day they endeavor to purify their love and to remove, by their prayers and their tears, all the stains which, by their unsightliness, delay the great gift that God is preparing for them. But shall we re-

main insensible, we who have committed faults much more considerable and more numerous, we who have still more abused the graces of God? O Holy Ghost, who canst not bear iniquity, and who dost everywhere destroy sin, make me weep over mine. O God, who art a consuming fire (Deut. IV, 24), send this sacred fire into my heart, the fire of Thy holy love, that it may break it, and reduce it to ashes, by sincere penance, by profound compunction and supreme regret for having displeased Thee; grant that, grieving unceasingly for having so long borne "the image of the earthly man", I may begin, by Thy grace, to bear "the likeness of the heavenly Man" (1 Cor. XV, 49).

III. POINT.

Finally, the assembled disciples joined to their thanksgivings and their sorrow ardent desires to open their hearts to the Holy Ghost, and to receive Him with the abundance of His gifts. The more they had been enlightened in regard to their own miseries, the more they desired to be strengthened with the power from on high of the Spirit, who was to work in them a new creation, and who already began it by His divine operation, a creation which of these vessels of clay was to make vessels of gold, vessels of election, proper to bear the Name of Jesus throughout the universe (Acts IX, 15). They said unceasingly to God: Send Thy Spirit, O Lord, send Thy Holy Spirit (Ps. CIII, 30), and we shall be created anew: by Him renew the face of the earth. Let us join our sighs and our desires to theirs; let us await with humble confidence the pouring forth of the Holy Ghost; let us ask it earnestly; let us seek Him by our prayers, by our tears, by our good works; let us persevere in this search, let us lift our desires to the throne of Jesus Christ, imploring Him, by the truth

of His promises, to give Him to us, and let us not render ourselves unworthy to receive His effects. O King of glory, O Lord of hosts, who dost triumph in the highest heavens, leave us not orphans, but send us the promise of the Father, the Spirit of truth.

Saturday, Vigil of Pentecost.

Love and obedience.

I. POINT.

"If you love Me, keep My commandments."

(John XIV, 15.)

The love of Jesus is the source of all good, and every good work is its fruit, as charity is its motive and end. The observance of the commandments is the proof of charity, and "he who says that he knoweth God", by the knowledge of love, "and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar" (1 John II, 4). We ought to love Jesus, not only in word, but in deed and in truth (1 John III, 18); as a lamp without oil, so charity without good works, is gradually extinguished. Charity must be preserved and increased, otherwise it diminishes and is in danger of being lost. As the beautiful but barren Rachel said to her husband: Give me children, or I shall die (Gen. XXX, 1); so charity says to our heart: Give me children, that is, holy actions, or I shall languish and die. The effective love of Jesus is the necessary preparation to receive the Holy Ghost. This precious gift is only for those who love Jesus. The Saviour makes His sun to shine, and dispenses His other blessings according to the order of nature, upon the good and the bad; but He gives His spirit only to His friends; His love attracts Him to them, and the Holy Spirit, who Himself has formed this love in their hearts, nourishes it, increases and perfects it.

II. POINT.

“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter” (John XIV, 16). Jesus says that He will send His Spirit, to show that He is true God with the Father, and that the Holy Ghost, proceeding from both in unity of source, is equally sent by them. He says that He will pray to His Father to send Him, in order to show that He is true man, that by His sufferings He has merited, and by His prayers has obtained for us this Divine Spirit. O most humble and efficacious prayer of Jesus! Humble, because He refers the gift of the Holy Ghost to the Father; efficacious, because He promises with certainty and obtains infallibly. Grant, O Jesus, that, according to Thy word, I may be worthy to receive this Divine Comforter. But what greater gift than His Holy Spirit could Jesus by His holy life merit for us, and what more salutary gift could He by His prayer ask and obtain for us? He clothes Himself with our miseries, with our infirmities, only to communicate to us His strength, His virtue, His holiness by the Holy Ghost, whom He pours into our hearts; and He did and suffered all, that He might obtain Him for us. O Jesus, since He has cost Thee so much, refuse Him not to our urgent desires.

III. POINT.

“He will give you another Comforter.” Jesus upon the earth, was the Comforter of earth; He relieved the unhappy, consoled the afflicted, healed the sick, did good to all (Acts X, 38). He said: You who are saddened by My departure, be consoled: “I will not leave you orphans, I will send you another Comforter” (John XIV, 18). The name of Comforter is given to the Holy Ghost, because in the Most Holy Trinity He is love and joy, and here below He comforts souls, and fills them

with holy joy in the midst of their afflictions. Therefore, the apostles rejoiced that they were found worthy to suffer opprobrium for the name of Jesus (Acts V, 41). This good Master said to them: "Stay you in the city till you be endued with power from on high (Luke XXIV, 49); words which we should all listen to, as being addressed to us to prepare us to receive the Holy Ghost. To rest in the city, is to shut ourselves up, to recollect ourselves, to withdraw from the vanity and distractions of the world, to pray and await with humility, with patience and perseverance, the free and abundant rain of the graces of the Holy Ghost, which Jesus is preparing to send to us from the throne of His glory.

Pentecost Sunday, or Whitsunday.

I. POINT.

"The Spirit of the Lord hath filled the whole world."
(Wis. I, 7.)

The Holy Ghost in His essence is one same God with the Father and the Son, eternal, infinite, equal in power, in majesty, in glory, and worthy to be equally adored and loved. It is the Holy Spirit, our God and our Lord, who is to-day sent and poured upon the apostles, and who is afterwards given to us, not by some sign and figure, but in His own person. He expresses this Himself in the Holy Scriptures, where it is often said that He will come into us, that He dwells in us (Rom. VIII, 9), that by Him "charity is poured into our hearts" (Rom. V, 5). O divine Spirit, Author and Source of all gifts, Thou who dost give Thyself, fill the whole earth, direct Thy Church, animate all her children. May my unworthiness not exclude me from this happiness, since Thou hast the power to make me worthy! Come, fill all the house of my soul. May my

spirit be enlightened and directed by Thee! May my body, my heart and my affections be purified by the fire of Thy holy love!

II. POINT.

The Holy Ghost descends under two sensible forms, to represent to us the two sensible effects of His presence in souls. The mighty wind which filled the whole house (Acts II, 2), signifies that, as the wind cleanses the atmosphere, which it purifies, dissipating the clouds which conceal the heavens and intercept the heat and the light of the sun; so the Holy Ghost, entering into our hearts, cleanses them from all stain, leaving no spot of sin, nor any of those clouds of irregular affection which cannot exist with Him, and which would hide from us His light and divine heat. The wind was impetuous, to represent the fervor of the Holy Ghost, who was to send throughout the universe the apostles, prefigured by the animals of Ezechiel, "which walked whither the impulse of the spirit was to go" (Ez. I, 12). As the wind is the cause of many changes in nature, so the Holy Ghost is the Author of those produced by grace; for it is He who has snatched men from idolatry, and called them to the worship of the true God, drawing them from sin to grace, from an animal life to a life angelic and supernatural, from indifference and cowardly timidity to courage and zeal for the glory of God. Let us henceforth be the organs and the instruments of the Holy Ghost; may He be the life of our soul, and the moving spring of all our actions. O Holy Ghost, purify me from all sin, from all self-love; draw me to Thee, and make me follow with fidelity the powerful motions of Thy grace.

III. POINT.

The tongues of fire which followed the impetuous wind (Acts II, 3), signify that the hearts, already

purified from self-love, ought to be filled and burning with the sacred fire of divine love; that we must root out before planting, destroy in order to build (Jer. I, 10), destroy profane love, that a pure and holy love may live and triumph in us. The apparition of the tongues shows us that the Holy Ghost, having filled the hearts of the apostles, was, by their preaching, to spread throughout the whole world. As fire burns, consumes and changes all things, so the Holy Ghost, by the supernatural fire of His love, destroys and consumes all earthly affections, substituting charity, which rectifies and sanctifies all that is done by its action. Fire, the most active of the elements, represents also the power of grace, which accomplishes great things, wherever it finds hearts prepared and empty. Finally, as fire gives light, warms, purifies, and always rises, so the Holy Ghost produces in us spiritually all these different effects. Come, Holy Ghost, dissipate the darkness by Thy brightness; warm what is cold, purify what is defiled; burn, consume, destroy in me all that is of me, and fill me with Thyself; lift my heart and my desires to heaven by the violence and activity of the flames of Thy holy love.

Whitmonday.

God's love for men.

I. POINT.

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son." (John III, 16.)

It is God who speaks, and He speaks of the love of God, which in God is God Himself. With what respect should we listen to Him! He speaks of it with wonder; and how can He wonder, who knows all things, who is true God and the wisdom of the Father, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of divine knowledge"

(Col. II, 3). Yet He wonders at the great love of God, and, as if transported, He exclaims: "God so loved the world!" The Father and the Son, loving each other with a reciprocal love, produce the Holy Ghost, who is their mutual love. Jesus does not wonder at this first love; but He is enraptured by the second, by the love which God bears to the world. Let us weigh these words: "God so loved the world." God, an abyss of perfection and of all good, has no need of me or of my possessions. Can God, who is sufficient to Himself, love anything outside of Himself, and is the world a worthy object of His love? Is there anything more remote from God, more unworthy of His regard than this world, which, compared with Himself, is less than an atom, a nothing, this corrupt world composed of sinners? Who will unite these two extremes? Love, and love alone. "God so loved the world." O love, abasing the supreme majesty, O love, triumphing over God Himself! Triumph over us, subject our hearts to Thee, absorb all our affections and all love, but that which tends to Thee.

II. POINT.

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son." It is thus that He has loved it, with a love so immense, that it seems to make Him forget His greatness and give His only Son, who emptied Himself to save us, clothing Himself with our nature. The mystery of His Incarnation is the most marvellous effect and the most powerful effort of the love of God, the master-piece and miracle of His goodness. Therefore it is attributed to the Holy Ghost, because the works of the charity of God belong to Him; and for this reason we believe and say in the Creed, that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost. This Divine Spirit in the Blessed Trinity does not produce another person; His

sterility is as adorable as the fecundity of the Father and the Son; but, exteriorly He acts, He produces a Man-God. His holy operation terminates in a Divine Person united with our human nature, and He unceasingly produces spiritually in us this same God made man, inspiring us with His love, and forming His divine likeness in our hearts. O fecundity of the Holy Ghost, infinitely salutary to us, and to which we must not oppose any obstacle.

III. POINT.

So greatly God loved the world, as to give it His Son; so greatly the Father and the Son loved it, as to communicate to it the Holy Ghost, their mutual love, the Source of all grace, and of all supernatural gifts. The Father had nothing dearer, more worthy or greater than His Son and His Spirit: He gives us the one by the Incarnation, and the other on the day of Pentecost. Jesus Christ, the Man-God, had nothing more divine and more excellent to give us than His Body and His Spirit: He gives us the former in His august Sacrament, and continues to pour His Holy Spirit into us in the work of justification. Finally, this Spirit of love and goodness does not disdain to devote Himself unceasingly to the sanctification of our souls, to be their light, their guide and leader, to dwell in them, to make them His temple and sanctuary, and He never leaves us, unless we first abandon Him. O precious and divine gifts! "O too great charity"! (Eph. II, 4). O excessive effort of love! If an object so vile, so unworthy to be loved as the sinful world, has such power over the heart of God, how should not this love of God, in return, have absolute power over us? How should it not take us captive and make us His slaves forever!

Tuesday after Whitsunday.**Purity of the Spirit of God.****I. POINT.**

The Holy Ghost descended as a dove."

(Mark I, 10.)

This happened at the baptism of Jesus, and expresses the different effects of the Holy Ghost in souls. The dove, a fruitful bird, represents to us, first, the fecundity of the Holy Spirit in the spiritual regeneration, which in baptism takes place in us through Him; in it we are born again of water and the Spirit, as Jesus said to Nicodemus (John III, 5). In the creation the Holy Ghost is borne upon the waters (Gen. I, 2), as if to purify them and to make them fruitful; and He Himself, in the Sacrament of baptism, communicates to the water which washes us exteriorly, the virtue to purify us interiorly, and to efface sin; and He accomplishes this new creation, by which, from children of men and "children of wrath" (Eph. II, 3), we become children of God. Whence proceeds the marvellous power of the water, which sanctifies the body, and washes the heart, if not from the invisible operation of this mighty Spirit! Therefore St. John said: "I baptize with water; but He that shall come after me, shall baptize you in fire and in the Holy Ghost" (Mat. III, 11). Finally, by the virtue of this Divine Spirit, the children of the Church are multiplied, like mystical fish, not only in the salutary waters of baptism, but in those of their own tears by penance; they imitate the dove in its continual moaning, in order to resemble it in its purity; and the Holy Ghost Himself forms in them the sighs and the moans, which He is pleased to hear favorably (Rom. VIII, 26). The Lord hears "the groaning of the poor" (Ps. XI, 6). David said to God: "My

groaning is not hidden from Thee" (Ps. XXXVII, 10). O adorable Sanctifier of souls, give me a contrite heart which is a sacrifice pleasing in Thy sight; "create in me a clean heart, renew a right spirit in the depths of my soul" (Ps. L, 12).

II. POINT.

The dove is the symbol of purity, and the Holy Ghost produces purity in us, when He removes from us three kinds of stains; the stain of sin, that of the flesh and the senses, and that of self-love. The Holy Ghost cleanses souls from the stain of sin, when He takes possession of them. With this view, He induces them carefully to avoid it, and therefore He says to them unceasingly, by the mouth of the prophet: Depart from iniquity, "cease to do evil" (Is. I, 16), turn away your eyes from sin. We should co-operate with Him, to receive the purity which He wishes to communicate to us. He purifies souls from the stain of the flesh and the senses. Our Lord says: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing" (John VI, 64). Mortify by the spirit the deeds and the desires of the flesh: this is what the Holy Ghost does in us by His presence. O Divine Spirit, who canst not bear iniquity! Give me a pure heart and a chaste body: purify my senses, my imagination, my mind, my thoughts, that my soul may become an abode worthy of Jesus. Finally, He purifies from the stain of self-love souls of whom He becomes the Master. This love of self is like dust scattered over the soul to tarnish its splendor. The Holy Ghost causes it to disappear, and substitutes in its stead the gold of charity; He kindles divine love, which cuts off all attachment to our own judgment, to subject it to the lights which come from God; all the imperfections of nature to enable us to act super-

naturally with pure and upright intentions. O Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier, come establish Thy abode in my soul, to purify and sanctify it by the efficacy and the virtue of Thy life-giving presence.

III. POINT.

The dove is also the symbol of simplicity, meekness and humility: dispositions which the Holy Ghost wishes to find in us, that He may reign in us at His pleasure, and which He establishes in us when we oppose no obstacle. He gives a holy simplicity which detaches us and separates us from the multiplicity of creatures, which destroys the vain desires by which our earthly affections are nourished, which lifts them up and fixes them in God alone, the only Object worthy of the thoughts, the desires and the love of the faithful and simple heart; which, finally, empties our heart of all and of itself, to fill it with God. This interior void attracts into us the Holy Ghost, and comes from Him; this void, this detachment destroys our self-love; it humbles us under the hand of God; it makes all yield to His power and bend under His authority; it renders us obedient, docile and submissive to His direction and inspirations. O Divine Spirit, render me pliant and flexible in Thy hands, as matter is to form, and wax to the seal, that I may receive all Thy impressions; render me powerless to resist Thy grace and Thy love.

Wednesday after Whitsunday.

Sins against the Holy Ghost.

I. POINT.

*"The Spirit of the Lord hath filled the whole earth."
(Wis. I, 7.)*

The Holy Ghost suffers no division; He wishes to occupy our whole heart. How could our hearts contain,

together with creatures, Him whose immensity heaven and earth cannot contain? If, then, we wish to receive the Holy Ghost, let us drive from our hearts all that can displease Him, that He may not Himself withdraw. There are sins which banish Him absolutely from us, which Jesus Christ calls sins against the Holy Ghost, and which will not be pardoned, either in this world or in the next (Mat. XII, 31), that is, they are pardoned very rarely and with great difficulty. We ought to tremble at the mere shadow of these sins, in punishment of which God abandons the soul to a "reprobate sense" (Rom. I, 28), and withdraws His Spirit. O God, "cast me not away from Thy face, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me" (Ps. L, 13). What happens more frequently, and we think little of it, is that for which St. Stephen reproached the Jews: "You always resist the Holy Ghost" (Acts VII, 51). We resist Him, when we oppose His will, reject the known truth, do not follow His motions, despise His inspirations, and frustrate His designs. How greatly should we fear to resist Him thus. How terrible, how dangerous for salvation is this resistance! How earnestly should we ask pardon of the Holy Ghost for our secret opposition to His graces in ourselves and others!

II. POINT.

"Quench not the Spirit of God" (Thes. V, 19). It is the crowning misfortune, when, closing our eyes to His light, we extinguish it, and defile our souls by mortal sin; or else, when we abandon the spirit of our vocation, when we lose the warmth of charity, and our first fervor has relaxed. Then we fall into negligence, afterwards into forgetfulness of God and our obligations, finally, into contempt of His word, of holy things and the duties of our state, and then into the abyss of all

miseries, blindness of mind and hardness of heart. O most holy and salutary warning of St. Paul, which we ought often to consider! "Quench not the Spirit of God." Let us humble ourselves before the divine Majesty; and if we have had the misfortune to extinguish in us the grace of the divine Spirit, let it be to us a subject of tears and sorrow during our whole life. Let us repair by our repentance the injury we have done to Him, and the harm that we have done to ourselves. Let us, above all, fear that dangerous tepidity which produces such fatal fruits, which is the beginning of the greatest evils, and which God protests He cannot suffer. He says: "Because Thou art lukewarm, I will begin to vomit thee out of My mouth" (Apoc. III, 16). Revive your first fervor, be zealous and do penance.

III. POINT.

St. Paul admonishes us also "not to grieve the Spirit of God" (Eph. IV, 30), as we do, when we refuse the grace that He offers, or when we do not esteem or preserve with sufficient care that which He has given us, when we fail to co-operate with it, thus rendering ourselves unworthy to receive greater graces. We grieve the Holy Ghost, who is the Spouse of our souls, by venial sins, above all by those which are committed with deliberation; we grieve Him by all our voluntary defects and imperfections. Let us prostrate ourselves before God, and with profound humility and contrition of heart, let us confess our ingratitude, the innumerable acts of infidelity by which we have grieved Him. Let us no longer offend the Spirit of grace; let us remember that, if those who maltreated and crucified Jesus Christ in His body, will be punished forever, those who offer insults to His Spirit (Heb. X, 29), and who abuse His grace, are still more guilty. Let us remove every ob-

stacle, let us separate ourselves from all that can prevent Him from acting powerfully and freely in us, that He may fill us with His graces. Our unworthiness will not drive Him away, if it displeases us, and the contrition of our heart will repair our past faults, and supply what is wanting.

Thursday after Whitsunday.

The seven gifts of the Holy Ghost.

I. POINT.

Jesus "ascending to heaven, gave His gifts to men."
(*Eph. IV, 8.*)

These gifts which represent several different graces, are all comprised in the precious and singular gift which Jesus this day pours from heaven upon His disciples. The Scripture says: The Holy Ghost had not been given, "because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John VII, 39); a gift of infinite dignity, called by Jesus "the gift of God" (John IV, 10), which contains the fulness of all His gifts. Isaiah notes seven, which seem especially proper to the Holy Ghost. That of fear (Is. XI, 3), which is named the last, is for us "the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. CX, 10) and of the spiritual life; it makes us dread separation from God, our supreme good; it makes us fear, above all things, to offend and displease Him, regarding Him as our most good and loving Father; it makes us respect the presence of His majesty; it subjects us to Him perfectly, as to our Lord and Master. The gift of fear is not only for sinners, but also for the just and the saints: "Fear the Lord, all ye that are His saints" (Ps. XXXIII, 10). St. Paul says: "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. II, 12). O my God, "pierce my flesh", and penetrate my heart "with Thy" salutary "fear" (Ps. CXVIII, 120).

II. POINT.

The gift of piety is a supernatural and divine sentiment, which renders the soul ready, fervent, and disposed to follow the motions of the Holy Ghost, which makes her enjoy God, regard Him as her Father, and have a tender and filial love for Him, giving Him the honor, homage and submission which are due to Him. St. Paul says: "You have received the spirit of adoption of sons, by which we call God Father" (Rom. VIII, 15), by which we address our supplications to God, pray to Him, have recourse to Him with all the confidence of a child in its father. St. John says: "See what is the gift of the charity of the Father, to wish that we should be called, and should be, sons of God" (1 John III, 1). Come, Holy Ghost, make us true children of God; imprint in our hearts the sentiments of love, respect, and filial confidence, which He has a right to expect from us. Counsel is another gift of the Holy Ghost, which renders the soul pliant, easily guided and directed by Him in all things, above all in what regards salvation and the perfection of His love. Come, Divine Spirit, "lead me in the path of Thy commandments" (Ps. CXVIII, 35), make me know Thy ways and follow Thy counsels. It is that we may fulfil them, that He communicates to us the gift of strength, a gift promised by Jesus: "You shall be endued with power from on high" (Luke XXIV, 49). This gift strengthens us against worldly fear and human respect; from it we draw a magnanimous courage, which enables us to surmount the difficulties and obstacles that are too often found in the practice of virtue. Come, O Holy Ghost, and by the efficacy of Thy gifts raise me above myself and all my miseries.

III. POINT.

The gift of knowledge is a light which enables us to make a right and safe judgment upon matters of faith, to discern what should be believed, followed and practised. The gift of understanding is also a supernatural light, which enables us to comprehend and penetrate the mysteries of faith, which dissipates their obscurity and darkness, rendering more clear, easy and steadfast our belief in the truths which they contain, and which are above reason, but not contrary to it. Jesus bestowed this gift on His disciples, when He made known to them the meaning of the Scriptures (Luke XXIV, 45), and when the Holy Ghost manifested to them what Jesus Christ had taught them (John XIV, 26), enlightening their minds to comprehend it. O Divine Spirit, "grant me" knowledge and understanding, and "I shall live" (Ps. CXVIII, 144). Wisdom, which is the most excellent of His gifts, is also a brilliant light, which enables us to know God, to appreciate and love His divine perfections, and to take delight in Him; it makes us see and judge according to principles superior to human reason; hence St. Paul says, that "the spiritual man judgeth of all, and is judged by no man" (1 Cor. II, 15), that is, he is not guided or governed by the vain ideas and false prejudices of worldly prudence. O Holy Ghost, give me this wisdom, send it from heaven, the throne of Thy greatness, that it may dwell and labor with me, and that I may know what is acceptable to Thee (Wis. IX, 10). Fill us with Thy seven gifts; that they may adorn our souls, to make them worthy to become Thy temples, to receive Jesus in holy Communion, and to merit the communication of His Spirit, which is Thyself; give us to Jesus, and may Jesus give Thee to us.

Friday after Whitsunday.**Effects attributed to the Holy Ghost.****I. POINT.***“O Lord, how good and sweet is Thy Spirit in all things.”**(Wis XII, 1.)*

The three Divine Persons have co-operated in our salvation: the Father, by the power of His arm, when He sent His Son; for if the creation is the work of His supreme power, how much more is that of the Incarnation; therefore the Blessed Virgin, inspired by the Holy Ghost, exclaimed: “He that is mighty hath done great things to me. . . . He hath showed might in His arm” (Luke I, 51). The Son employed the strength “hidden in His hands” (Hab. III, 4), as St. Paul expresses it, when, nailed to the Cross, “He wrought our salvation in the midst of the earth” (Ps. LXXIII, 12). The redemption is the work of His wisdom. The Holy Ghost, called “the finger of God” (Luke XI, 20) and the virtue of the Most High, came to complete this work, when He was poured upon the infant Church, when He converted the world and sanctified souls. This is the proper effect of the divine goodness, and the love of the Holy Ghost; therefore He, by His coming into the world, was the consummation of our salvation and of all the mysteries of Jesus: all that the Saviour did, said and suffered, was to procure for us the possession of this Divine Spirit; this was the object and end of His mortal career, the fruit of His labors and sufferings. By His prophets the Holy Ghost had predicted all the circumstances, and Jesus wished to be Himself the prophet of the Holy Ghost. O how much did it cost Jesus to bestow on us this precious gift! And since it has been merited and purchased for us at so great a cost, the price of the life and the blood of a God, how

dear should it be to us! How ardently should we seek it, desire it, ask for it! With what care, with what fervor should we preserve it!

II. POINT.

It is also a work of the Holy Ghost to render proper and peculiar to each one, what Jesus merited for all in general; so that by this liberal application each one may say with St. Paul: "He hath loved me, and hath delivered Himself for me" (Gal. II, 20). He came, lived and died for me as really, as if there had been only my soul to save. The Holy Ghost enables us to reap all the fruits and receive all the graces, which Jesus merited abundantly for all. If Jesus in His mortal life was the tree of life, the coming of the Holy Ghost is its fruit; and if Jesus is the Sun of our souls, the Holy Ghost bears it to us, and opens our eyes to its light. O Divine Spirit, I give Thee thanks that through Thee all that Jesus has done, said, and suffered, is mine and for me, and that the immense treasures of His graces and merits belong to me; apply them to me efficaciously, operate in me according to the full extent of Thy power and goodness, according to all the designs and the eternal desires of Thy mercy.

III. POINT.

It is also a work of the Holy Ghost to put Jesus in possession of His kingdom, that is, of our souls, which are the domain of the Son of God; for by His Passion He acquired the right of sovereignty over us, and in His Ascension He was established by the Father Lord of all things (Acts II, 36). The Holy Ghost came to cause Him to exercise His power, and to subject our hearts to Him; He came to establish His reign throughout the earth, and as Jesus, during the whole time that He remained here, labored only to glorify His Father

and to manifest His name to men, so the Holy Ghost descends here below, only to procure the glory of Jesus, and to extend His knowledge and love: "He shall give testimony of Me" (John XV, 27), and He shall glorify Me, said Jesus. Jesus left to Him this care, and in proportion as He suffered, the Holy Ghost strove to exalt Him, to cause Him to be revered, feared and adored. He also enlightens souls and opens their understanding, to enable them to comprehend the sublime truths announced by Jesus preaching to the world. Jesus Christ said to the apostles: "The Holy Ghost shall teach you all truth" (John XVI, 13); "He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, that I have said to you" (John XIV, 26). Blessed is he, who is taught by Thee! Come, make me know and love Jesus and His doctrine; give Him full and absolute possession of my soul; may He reign over me with supreme authority forever!

Saturday after Whitsunday.

Three plenitudes of the Holy Ghost.

I. POINT.

"They were all filled with the Holy Ghost."

(Acts II, 4.)

The first plenitude of the Holy Ghost was in Jesus; a singular plenitude, which is the source of that of the saints. The humanity of Jesus Christ was God's most worthy temple, and consecrated in the holiest manner to the majesty of God by the unction of the Divinity itself. St. Paul says: "For in Him dwelleth corporally all the fulness of the Godhead" (Col. II, 9). Jesus is called full of the Holy Ghost, who sanctified His humanity, and filled it with grace from the first moment of its existence, and from that time this fulness was

perfect and complete, incapable of increase, as the sun had all its light from the first moment of its creation. The Holy Ghost was in Jesus with the fulness of all grace. St. John said: "We have seen Him full of grace and truth" (John I, 14), and there is nothing in Him, or proceeding from Him,—such as His thoughts, actions and words,—which is not full of grace and a source of grace for us. Finally, the Holy Ghost was the principle of all His motions; therefore one evangelist says that "He was led by the Spirit" (Mat. IV, 1); another, that He was urged or driven by the Spirit into the desert (Luke IV, 1). By a participation in this divine guidance, "all they that are led by the Spirit of God, are the sons of God" (Rom. VIII, 14). O Jesus, we have received all from Thy fulness: without Thee we can have nothing; communicate to us Thy Spirit, make us docile, like Thee, to His inspirations and His guidance.

II. POINT.

The second fulness of the Holy Ghost was in the Blessed Virgin, who is called "full of grace" (Luke I, 28). The angel said to her, that the Holy Ghost would come upon her (Luke I, 35), as if to load her with a new and superabundant grace, the fulness of which surpasses that of all the saints; therefore the Fathers exclaim: Grace was given to others with measure; but it was all poured forth in Mary: as all rivers flow into the sea, so the different graces communicated to the saints are united in Mary. If Jesus is a Sun of grace, Mary is the moon, and the saints are the stars: as the moon borrows its light from the sun, so Mary receives all from Jesus: the moon has more splendor than all the stars together, and the grace of Mary surpasses that of all the saints. Let us rejoice with her in her holiness; but let us do more, let us imitate her dispositions.

She never opposed an obstacle to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost; she always corresponded to all His motions with prompt and faithful obedience, to the full extent of her capacity; none of the graces that she received remained barren; her life was a continual progress in grace and love; therefore the angels admire her, saying: "Who is this that cometh up as the morning rising, beautiful as the moon, brilliant as the sun" (Cant. VI, 9), who is always advancing from grace to grace, from virtue to virtue, in her conception, in her delivery, in her triumph, in her Assumption.

III. POINT.

The third fulness of the Holy Ghost was found in the apostles, and it was of two kinds; the first, which was personal, filled them with a new grace, a new fervor, and with all the gifts of the Holy Ghost; the second was for all the faithful, who, in the series of ages, would receive the faith and the same Holy Spirit by their ministry; and as a mark of this double participation in the Holy Ghost, which was communicated to them, the one for themselves, the other for the Church, the Holy Ghost was given to them at two different times; first, after the resurrection, when Jesus said to them: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John XX, 22); and afterwards by Jesus seated at the right hand of God the Father, on the day of Pentecost. But what wonderful effects the Holy Ghost produced in them! They were presumptuous, cowardly and timid; He made them humble, courageous, fervent, full of strength, ardor and zeal, ready to suffer the most cruel tortures, and to undertake all for the name and glory of Jesus Christ. From ignorant and coarse men, as they were, He made them the masters and teachers of the world; finally, from earthly men, He, by a happy transformation, made

them heavenly and divine. O Holy Ghost, who art always the same! Produce in us similar effects; may this prophecy be accomplished to-day: "I will pour My Spirit upon all flesh" (Joel II, 28); I will give you a new heart, I will renew your spirit within you (Ez. XXXVII, 14). I will take away your heart of stone, and I will make it tender, docile, submissive to all My will, communicating to it My own Spirit.

MEDITATIONS FOR FEASTS.

St. Andrew, Apostle.

November 30th.

I. POINT.

"We have found the Messiah" (John I, 41).

St. Andrew was not only an apostle of the people, but of the apostles themselves. As formerly Moses appeared with his face shining, after having conversed with God, so St. Andrew, inflamed by his familiar conversation with Jesus, and burning with the desire to communicate the hidden treasure which had been made known to him, hastened to his brother and announced Jesus, saying to him: "We have found the Messiah." We have found Him, whom we sought, in whom we hope, and for whom all nature sighs. O happy meeting! Blessed saint, first disciple, first preacher of Jesus, master even of the prince of the Church! Teach us to know Jesus, teach us to find Him by love, and to attach ourselves to Him by holy perseverance, that we may say with thee: We have found Jesus; and with the Spouse: "I have found Him, I hold Him, and I will not let Him go" (Cant. III, 4). St. John had prepared the way of the Messiah, he had pointed out Jesus, saying: Behold the Lamb of God, "the Desired of the nations" (Agg. II, 8). But St. Andrew did more; for he began to exercise the apostolic ministry by leading disciples to Jesus, and among others his brother, that zealous disciple, who was to unite in one same faith,

and to guide to Jesus, so many souls from all parts of the universe. O Lord, may my soul be among the number of those, whom Thou dost admit to Thy companionship; receive it by the hands of Thy faithful disciple; vouchsafe to establish Thy empire in me, and make it firm forever.

II. POINT.

St. John, with two of his disciples, "seeing Jesus walking", said to them: "Behold the Lamb of God" (John I, 29). All the actions and all the movements of Jesus on earth, being directed by the Spirit of God, according to His eternal designs, tended to the salvation of souls, to their conversion and sanctification. Jesus wished to be seen by St. John, in order to make Himself known to his disciples; He wished to call St. Andrew to follow Him, to begin the Apostolic College with him. St. John, as if struck with astonishment, admiration and respect, on beholding Jesus, endeavored to excite the same sentiments in the hearts of his disciples, and to induce them to believe in Him. "Behold the Lamb of God", said he; the Lamb offered and "sacrificed to God" (Apoc. XIII, 8) "from the beginning of the world", for the salvation of the world itself; the Lamb pure and spotless, by whose precious blood we are redeemed (1 Pet. I, 19); the Lamb, not in figure like the paschal lamb, or the other victims that were sacrificed under the Old Law, but the Divine Lamb, who, after having been immolated to God by a bloody sacrifice on the Cross, is every day sacrificed to Him on the Altar, without the shedding of blood, and who remains entire after His adorable Flesh has been the sacred food and nourishment of His people. "O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world", destroy forever the least stains of mine; may Thy abode in my

soul by holy Communion be a seed of grace for eternity; grant that, having seen Thee with the eyes of faith, I may abandon and leave all, as Thy apostle did, to follow Thee, and attach myself to Thee alone.

III. POINT.

The two brothers St. Peter and St. Andrew, having had the same advantage of coming first to the apostleship, had also, above the other apostles, that of being distinguished in their martyrdom, and of enduring one which gave them a special and peculiar conformity with Jesus Christ; for, in imitation of this dear Master, they both sacrificed their life to God upon the altar of the Cross. St. Andrew, penetrated with esteem and gratitude for this favor, transported with love for the Cross, and animated with a holy and ardent impatience to be fastened to it, exclaimed, beholding it from afar: Hail, O precious Cross, embellished by the sacred limbs of my Lord; receive the disciple of Him who was fastened to thee; Cross, long desired, ardently loved, and unremittingly sought for, take me and give me to my Master, that through thee I may be received by Him, who redeemed me by thee. Is it a man, an angel, or some superior being, asks St. Bernard, who uses this language? No, it is a man like unto us, and passible as we are; but a man who had the greatest desire to suffer and die for Jesus Christ, because he loved Him and lived in Him more than in himself. O great saint, make us share thy courage and thy burning zeal for suffering; make us know its price and value, that, like thee, we may prefer the opprobrium of Jesus Christ and the honor of suffering for Him, to the vain glory of the world and all its deceitful pleasures.

St. Francis Xavier, apostle of the Indies.**December 3rd.****I. POINT.***The saint's humility, the source of his glory.*

Francis Xavier was a brilliant and ambitious professor of philosophy in the celebrated university of Paris. His success rendered him still more ambitious and eager for fame and honors. St. Ignatius, to show him the vanity of every thing human and to win him over to the cause of Jesus Christ, was wont to repeat often to him: "Xavier, suppose the world would entirely satisfy your ambition, how long would your happiness last? Moreover, what doth it profit a man, if he were to gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his soul?" Struck by these truths, the young professor made the Spiritual Exercises under the direction of St. Ignatius, and thenceforth sought to procure only the glory of God. As much as he had yearned after honors, so much the more eagerly he henceforth sought humiliations. Intimately persuaded of his own nothingness, he considered himself only as a great sinner, as an unprofitable servant, deserving of contempt, and, as he said, hindering the progress of the Gospel and spoiling the work of God. He would at times go to beg his food, serve the sick in the hospitals and perform there the meanest services. But the more he humbled himself, the more God was pleased to exalt him, so true it is, that sincere humility, and not ambition, is the road to true greatness. "If I glorify Myself," says our Lord, "My glory is nothing. It is My Father that glorifieth Me" (John VIII, 54). Where is the proud or ambitious man who has ever conquered a glory equal to that bestowed on St. Francis Xavier as a reward for his humility? What great man of the world has ever been so greatly hon-

ored? The prodigies he wrought wherever he passed, caused him to be revered almost as a deity by princes and peoples. The more he shunned glory, the more it followed him, because he referred it all to God.

What a folly for us to pretend to exalt ourselves by seeking worldly esteem and fame,—those reefs on which so many are wrecked and eternally lost!—O Jesus, meek and humble of heart, through the intercession of St. Francis Xavier, deign to form my heart like unto Thine, so that I may in all things seek only Thy glory and Thy good pleasure.

II. POINT.

The saint's humility, a source of blessings and glory for the Church.

If Francis Xavier had remained a professor in Paris, and had continued to court earthly honors, how little he would have effected for God and His Church! But by subduing his ambition he changed an ignoble passion into one that is lawful and far more exalted,—that of devoting himself wholly and unreservedly to the greater glory of God. With this object in view, he turned his body into a victim constantly immolated by privations, austerities and hardships of all kinds. He unceasingly humbled himself before God, beseeching Him day and night to bless his ministry and bring back the stray sheep to the fold. His zeal was so ardent and he was so forgetful of self, that he seemed rather to fly than to run to the conquest of nations to the Gospel. Stormy seas, arid deserts, dangers and snares of every kind, nothing could restrain him. Hunger and thirst, incessant labors and fatigue, only served to increase his zeal for souls and the glory of God. In ten years he preached Jesus Christ crucified to fifty-two kingdoms, and converted and baptized more than a million pagans.

His virtues, miracles, prophecies and extraordinary labors, and the numberless conversions he made wherever he went, spread so great a splendor over the Catholic Church, at the very height of the miscalled Reformation, that even Protestants were moved and astonished.

And whence did all these wonders proceed? From the saint's humility, a humility which produced in him self-denial, love of prayer and fidelity to grace. How powerful is the virtue of humility! How many sinners would become great saints, if they were to humble themselves as much as they strive to exalt themselves! Are we not among the number of those who vainly imagine they can become humble by merely desiring to be humble, but who refuse to be humbled?—O Jesus, by the merits of Thy most holy Mother, and of St. Francis Xavier, grant me a profound humility and complete self-denial, the grace of constant prayer and fidelity to Thy inspirations, so that I may seek and procure Thy glory in all that I do. Amen.

Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

December 8th.

I. POINT.

“The Lord hath possessed me from the beginning of His ways; before He made anything, . . . I was already conceived” (Prov. VIII, 22, 24).

These words which properly refer to the Eternal Wisdom, are attributed by His inspiration to the Blessed Virgin, chosen from all eternity to be His Mother. Struck with astonishment at the sight of the excellencies and privileges with which this incomparable Virgin was loaded from the first moment of her con-

ception, ought we not to exclaim that one abyss calls on another abyss: "Deep calleth on deep" (Ps. XLI, 8). The first abyss is the birth, or eternal generation of the Word, of the uncreated Wisdom in the bosom of the Father; an abyss profound, incomprehensible, adorable, which the angels contemplate and cannot comprehend, for the prophet says: "Who shall declare His generation?" (Is. LIII, 8). This abyss calls on another abyss. The abyss of the ineffable greatness, of the infinite perfections of the Word, born of God before all ages, calls for the abyss of all the graces which Mary received in time. At the moment when she was predestinated in the eternal decrees of God, to be His Mother, all the favors and all the prerogatives befitting a Mother of God were forthwith prepared for her, and granted to her from the first instant of her conception. Mary was conceived immaculate on this day for our sanctification and our happiness, that by the merit and the virtue of Him, whom she was to conceive in her chaste womb, we ourselves might be conceived and brought forth to salvation. O Blessed Virgin, whose immaculate conception we honor, recognizing thee to be "the tabernacle which the Most High had sanctified", we profess that He is in the midst of thee, that thou mayst not be shaken, and that He has assisted thee from the coming up of the dawn (Ps. XLV, 6). Grant that the progress and continuation of our life may be like the beginning of thine, and that to receive worthily at the altar the precious gift which was to be bestowed on thee, we may receive some emanation from thee, some participation in thy graces, thy virtues and thy perfect dispositions.

II. POINT.

The conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary was as the dawn of the day, and that of Jesus as the light of

the sun, which follows it closely. As the Aurora borrows all its beauty from the sun, so Mary received all from Jesus; and although in the order of nature the conception of Mary preceded, in the order of grace it was dependent on that of the Saviour. Mary, having been sanctified on account of her foreseen dignity, by an anticipated grace, by a preventing grace, was preserved from sin at the moment of the union of her soul with her body; for, as formerly the river Jordan respected the Ark of the Covenant by checking the course of its waters, at its passage (Jos. III, 16), in like manner, the torrent of original iniquity checked the impetuosity of its corrupt waters, respecting in Mary the future presence of the true Tabernacle of the Eternal Covenant. Thus Jesus was the Saviour of His Mother, not by raising her up, but by preserving her; not by delivering her from sin, but by preventing her from falling into it, paying her ransom before she was a prisoner: a preventing mercy which we ought to desire ardently and to ask for often and humbly, not with regard to original sin, but with regard to actual sin. The exemption from original sin granted to Mary was followed by numberless other privileges; but, in particular, it rendered her conception pure, holy, and thus worthy of our veneration and our respect. It is not so with the other children of Adam, for David says: "I was conceived in iniquities, and in sins did my mother conceive me" (Ps. L, 7). This should keep us in constant fear and humility, for how many other sins followed the unhappy sin which infected our origin! O Virgin, always full of grace, alone immaculate and spotless, may all the stains of my soul be effaced by the precious Blood of Him, who prevented thee with His love and "the benedictions of His sweetness" (Ps. XX, 4). May His clemency shine forth, and may "His grace

abound, where sin hath abounded"! (Rom. V, 20). May this sin, which I abhor, be forever destroyed and annihilated in me.

III. POINT.

The Blessed Virgin, conceived without sin, was afterwards, as an object worthy of the regard and favor of God, filled and loaded with the most precious gifts of His Spirit, in a manner far more excellent, and exalted above all the angels and all the saints. From this moment she surpassed them all in grace and holiness: a grace, a holiness, which in her extinguished all the rebellion of the flesh and the assaults of the passions, enlightening her mind with divine lights, and inflaming her heart with a most pure love: therefore, from that moment, she vowed and consecrated herself entirely to God, beginning to make a most holy use of grace, which constantly increased in her through the renewed and constant fidelity with which she always corresponded to it. Let us who, in the name and by the virtue of the blessed fruit of her womb, have been regenerated in the waters of baptism; who from children of darkness, as we were formerly, have become the children of light (Eph. V, 8), let us, in imitation of Mary, grow in the knowledge and love of God (Col. I, 13); let us correspond with the grace of our vocation, and secure it by good works.

Feast of St. Thomas, Apostle.

December 21st.

I. POINT.

"Thomas was not with them, when Jesus came."

(John XX, 24.)

God is infinitely good and infinitely powerful; by the union of these two divine perfections He draws

good even from evil: thus from the incredulity of the Jews He draws the salvation of the gentiles. He permits the distrust of St. Joseph, in order to render the virginal purity of Mary more unquestionable and more brilliant; and to-day He makes use of the incredulity of St. Thomas and his separation from the other disciples, to establish more firmly the belief in His resurrection. For, according to St. Gregory, this essential article of faith was confirmed more by the doubt of this apostle than by the belief of all the others. Jesus Christ, with ineffable sweetness and a condescension full of mercy, wishing to convert His disciple and to enable him to expiate his infidelity, made him touch, in presence of the others, the wounds which He had received, that he might give a more special testimony of His resurrection: "What we have seen with our eyes, what our hands have handled of the Word of life, this we "testify" and "declare to you" (1 John I, 1). O most sweet and loving Providence of God! Who, with a goodness equal to His power, makes all things turn to His glory and the salvation of His elect! O good Jesus, by the virtue of Thy holy wounds, heal the deep and dangerous wounds of my soul.

II. POINT.

If the unbelief of St. Thomas served to strengthen the faith of the Church, it was after Jesus had used it to establish and perfect this fundamental virtue, in a marvellous manner, in the heart of this saint; for Thomas, having confessed his sin, repented so sincerely, that he rose to the most sublime degree of this virtue. This is the opinion of the Church, which attributes to him the article on the resurrection in the Creed, and which, especially revering the firmness of his faith, on this day asks God to give His children the grace to

imitate him. St. Thomas teaches us by his example to repair our faults by the faithful practice of the contrary virtues. The holy Fathers also require this to constitute a sincere repentance. For true repentance ought not to be satisfied with abstaining from sin, expiating it by a few tears, a few transient satisfactions; it should apply the remedy to the evil, and labor seriously and efficaciously to acquire the virtues and to practise the good works opposed to the past vices and irregularities. Such are worthy fruits of penance (Mat. III, 8); you have taken the property of another, restore it, and pour your own liberally into the lap of the poor. You have slandered; suffer others to slander you, and endeavor to give more honor than you have taken away. O Jesus, to whom alone it belongs to make these happy changes, change my heart, render it meek, humble, charitable, and according to Thy own heart.

III. POINT.

“My Lord and my God” (John XX, 28). St. Thomas, restored to a life of faith by his humble belief in the resurrection of his Master, and entering upon a new existence, exclaims with ardent faith: “My Lord and my God!” He recognizes Jesus, he adores Him as his God, he submits to Him as to his Lord; for these two words contain these different acts of faith: submission, confidence, adoration, and love. St. Thomas enters into the life of faith, which is the life of the just (Hab. II, 4), and which, at the very time of the mortal life of Jesus,—at the time that the pillars of the Church seemed shaken, when its greatest lights appeared without brightness, when the apostles did not understand the divine lessons of the Cross, the crucifixion, the destruction and death of the old man,—had drawn from his heart the cry of generous devotion: “Let us go and

die with Him" (John XI, 16). For, properly speaking, what is it to live by faith, but to esteem only future goods, and to aspire to them unceasingly, to despise this present life, knowing, according to the words of the Holy Ghost, that "every man living is only vanity" (Ps. XXXVIII, 6). Let us regard all that is passing here below as a dream; let us not esteem visible things, because they are perishable and fleeting, but invisible things which are permanent and eternal. O great saint, may I live by faith, as thou didst; obtain for me grace to anticipate death, by dying to myself, and to all that is not God.

Feast of St. Genevieve, Virgin, Patroness of Paris.

JANUARY 3RD.

I. POINT.

St. Paul says: A christian virgin thinks only how to serve God, and to render herself holy in body and mind, in order to be pleasing to Him (1 Cor. VII, 34). St. Genevieve, prevented with the benedictions of God from her very infancy, consecrated to Him her thoughts, her affections, her person and her life; she corresponded perfectly to His designs, and she could address to Him these words of the prophet: "Thou hast protected me from my mother's womb" (Ps. CXXXVIII, 13). Thou hast taught me from my youth (Ps. LXX, 17); and Thy mercy which has prevented me (Ps. LVIII, 9), shall surround me always, and accompany me during all the different ages of my life (Ps. XXII, 6). This saint experienced how advantageous it is to bear the yoke of the Lord from early youth (Lam. III, 27); and she thus rose above herself. The ardor of her charity, the purity of her desires, and the fervor of her prayer which, according to the recommendation of Jesus Christ

and His apostle, was continuous, were the fruits of her early devotion to God. Penetrated with the truth of these words, "without Me you can do nothing" (John XV, 5), you cannot even form a good thought (2 Cor. III, 5), she guided herself by these maxims, "it behooveth always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke XVIII, 1); pray without ceasing (Luke XXI, 36). Enlightened by faith, taught by the Holy Ghost that grace is given to us for each action, she always asked for grace, and humbly acknowledged her necessity. Can we wonder if all her actions were prodigies of holiness, so many masterpieces of grace?

II. POINT.

To be holy in body as well as in mind, St. Genevieve practised severe penance. She never drank anything but water; she ate only twice a week, and never flesh-meat at any time. Her eyes were fountains of tears, which her lively and humble compunction caused to flow unceasingly; her patience was great in illness, invincible in adversity. To prove her, our Lord permitted her to become leprous, and she bore this trial with silent and admirable resignation, as well as the contradictions and calumnies by which efforts were made to tarnish her reputation. She had four excellent dispositions which were the fruits and effects of the spirit of penance by which she was animated: her mortification, her tears, her patience, her meekness, and all her virtues were established upon the solid foundation of a true and profound humility, which rendered her as contemptible and little in her own eyes as she was great in the eyes of God and men.

III. POINT.

All the virtues of St. Genevieve received new splendor from the divine love which was their moving

spring and first source: this blessed spouse of Jesus Christ was all burning with the flames of divine love, she spread them everywhere, breathing only the glory of God and the salvation of the neighbor, for whom her charity was boundless. She greatly compassionated sinners and wept bitterly over their faults, as if they had been her own; she delivered prisoners by her prayers, by her influence and her miracles; she relieved, served and assisted the poor; and history relates that one year the bread which she ordered to be baked for them being miraculously multiplied in the oven, enabled them to live during the great famine. Like a courageous Judith, by the sword of her prayer she delivered Paris from the fury of Attila, the terrible king of the Huns, surnamed the scourge of God; like Elias, she opened and closed the heavens (James V, 17), causing the rain to fall or to cease, according to necessity; she formed and guided in the ways of God the virgins and widows of Paris; as long as she lived, the poor and the rich, the great and the little, felt the effects of her powerful intercession with God. Her protection did not end with her life: from high heaven, where her charity is in its perfection, she obtains the same graces for all who invoke her here below. God is pleased thus to exalt her glory, and to show His power by what appears the weakest. "He looketh down on the low things in heaven and in earth; raising up the needy from the earth, and lifting up the poor out of the dung-hill, that He may place him with princes, with the princes of His people" (Ps. CXII, 7). St. Clotilde, who obtained the conversion of King Clovis, her spouse, and afterwards that of his whole kingdom, remains almost forgotten, and the simple shepherdess, born her subject, is preferred to her; her memory became fam-

ous, sovereigns prostrated themselves at her feet, and kings respected her ashes. O great saint, beloved by God and honored by men, renew thy miracles, do spiritually in our favor all that thou didst formerly; deliver us from our invisible enemies, cause the mercies of the Lord to rain down upon us, obtain for us the bread of His graces, and vouchsafe to be the shepherdess and the guide of our souls upon earth, that they may one day be united to thee on the holy mountains of a blessed eternity. Amen.

Feast of St. Antony, Abbot.

January 17th.

I. POINT.

"If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor." (Mat. XIX, 21.)

When St. Antony was still young, he one day entered a church whilst these words were being read. Jesus Christ made them heard in his heart, in a manner so vivid and so penetrating, that he had no doubt but that they were addressed to him, and, faithful to the grace which attracted him, he went without delay to sell all his possessions, and distribute the price to the poor. Thus stripped of earthly goods, and having become poor himself, he abandoned all intercourse with cities, and retired to a remote solitude, there to labor for that perfection, for which he had left all. There he lived only on the roots produced by the soil, but his soul, raised to heaven by the most sublime contemplation of divine truths, was nourished and sustained by God Himself. The day being too short for this delightful occupation, he continued it during the night, and complained of the sun, which came so early to disturb him and to distract him from his agreeable conversation

with God. O man of God, who, without consulting the world and its false wisdom, didst follow unhesitatingly the voice of Him who called thee; thou, who, in consequence of Christ's words, didst, like the prophet, "keep hard ways" (Ps. XVI, 4), rough, unknown to the effeminacy and the cowardice of worldlings, enable us to learn from thee, to listen to the word of God with a submissive spirit and a docile heart. Alas! it strikes our ears continually without touching our hearts, that are always cold, ungrateful, unfaithful to God. Let us fear lest the divine word should never return with its efficacy, and thus condemn those whom it has not sanctified.

II. POINT.

"Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee" (Tob. XII, 13). These words, spoken by the angel to Tobias, are strikingly applicable to St. Antony in the midst of his desert, where he was exposed to continual temptations. With supernatural and heavenly prudence, he had fled from all the dangers of the world, from its deceitful allurements and seductive pleasures. He had not to disentangle himself from flesh and blood, for by the grace of Jesus Christ he had conquered them; but he had to fight against spiritual enemies, and, according to the expression of St. Paul, against the powers and spirits of darkness (Eph. VI, 12). The evil spirits, always envious of the happiness of men, came unceasingly to disturb the sacred repose which he enjoyed; unable to endure his holiness, they endeavored to tarnish its splendor, and to corrupt his virtue by their importunities and their pernicious suggestions; but the soldier of Jesus Christ, armed with humble confidence in his divine Chief, with the sharp sword of the divine word (Heb. IV, 12) and the invincible shield of faith,

repelled all their darts (Eph. VI, 16); and, without receiving any wounds, remained always victorious and triumphant. In him was verified the saying of the Holy Ghost, repeated so often and in so many ways in Holy Writ: "The life of man upon earth is a warfare" (Job VII, 1). "Blessed is he that endureth temptation, because after having been proved, he will receive the crown of life" (James I, 12). Blessed are the just! They shall pass through many tribulations, it is true; but "the Lord will deliver them from all their troubles" (Ps. XXIV, 22).

III. POINT.

"The wilderness shall rejoice and shall flourish as the lily; it shall bud forth and blossom, and shall rejoice with joy and praise" (Is. XXXV, 1). St. Antony alone, separated from the world, and invisible to men, nevertheless, by the odor of his virtues, attracted a great multitude, who, following his steps, swore an eternal separation from the world, and retired to the desert near him. Our saint, hidden in an inaccessible retreat, buried in a deep cavern, peopled Egypt with solitaries, who afterwards spread themselves in all directions. Therefore, by the abundant and wonderful fruits of his penance and prayers, he merited to be called a pillar of the Church, and by his testimony, he strengthened the faith. He was the great physician of Egypt, where he cured the sick and relieved the afflicted; finally, he was almost equal to the apostles, whose ardent zeal he imitated. Yet this great saint, so universally esteemed and respected by the most learned and illustrious saints of his time, after having grown gray under the yoke of Jesus Christ, after having given Him thousands of true adorers, to whom he was a father and a model, scarcely dared at the sight of St. Paul, the first hermit, to consider himself worthy of being his disciple. Touched by

his holy and austere life, comparing himself with him, and melting into tears, he said to his monks on his return, that he did not deserve to bear the name of a religious and a solitary. O great saint, thinking of thee, what shall we say? Are we Christians, are we disciples of Jesus Christ? What ought we to say and to think, when contemplating thy heroic virtues, above all, thy humility, which enhanced, in an admirable manner, the value of so many other gifts, so many other rare and sublime virtues, with which grace had adorned thy heart.

The Conversion of St. Paul.

January 25th.

I. POINT.

“Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?”

(Acts IX, 4.)

St. Augustine says, that the conversion of a sinner is a greater miracle than the creation of the world; for in it God shows His power and goodness in a more striking manner. The creation cost Him only a word: “He spoke, and all things were made” (Acts IX, 15); the conversion of a soul cost Him the life, the labors and the blood of His Son. From the highest heaven, the Son of God to-day calls St. Paul; from a blasphemer, from a persecutor of the Church and His religion, He calls Him to be the apostle of the gentiles, a preacher of His Gospel, a vessel of election, to carry His name before kings and all the peoples of the earth (Acts IX, 15). A conversion so much the more admirable, as St. Paul was the farther from it and most unworthy; for it took place at the moment, when, animated with bitter zeal and implacable fury, he was persecuting the disciples of the Lord, that he was, by the most wonderful of graces, chosen to the apostleship.

This holy apostle never lost the remembrance of the divine mercy, and it is he who reminds us, that it was "on the same night when Jesus was betrayed, that He took bread and blessed" (1 Cor. XI, 23). By an admirable contrast, in instituting the Blessed Eucharist, He showed forth His love, at the very moment when He was receiving the blackest ingratitude. O great God! It is "Thou who dost these wonders" (Ps. LXXVI, 15); these are the effects of Thy ineffable charity. Because I have sinned much and grievously (Ps. XXIV, 11), from Thee alone I can expect and hope for pardon; grant it to me, O Lord, and "have pity on me according to Thy great mercy" (Ps. L, 3), that mercy which causes grace to superabound, where sin had abounded (Rom. V, 20).

II. POINT.

Sacred history relates three celebrated conversions: that of St. Matthew, who from a publican was made an apostle; that of St. Magdalene, who from a vessel of impurity was changed into a vessel of holiness, and that of St. Paul, who from a persecutor of Jesus Christ became His preacher. The first conversion was a victory over the lust of the eyes, or avarice; the second, over the concupiscence of the flesh, and the third over the pride of the spirit, a vice which belongs more to the devil than to man; therefore his conversion was more difficult and a greater miracle in the order of grace; to accomplish it, the almighty word was needed which formed the heavens and drew the world from nothing. The Son of God said to Saul: "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest" (Acts IX, 5). These words threw him to the ground and completely changed him; they blinded him corporally to enlighten him spiritually. From an enemy arrogant, rash and proud, they made a man

meek, humble, submissive, a faithful disciple. He was sent to Ananias to be instructed: here the heavenly light ceases, because in what regards the salvation of each one, men should be directed by men; the rule is general, and Paul himself is not an exception. He is commanded to submit to the ministerial teaching of the Church: he obeys, and in this he finds a conversion, real, true and perfect, in contempt of himself and in the humble obedience which is its fruit. These are the foundations of the sublime elevation and the eminent holiness of the Doctor of the nations. He knew how to be humble, and always afterwards he preserved the rarest humility in the highest positions, and still regarded himself as the least in the Church and the greatest of sinners.

III. POINT.

“Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” (Acts IX, 6). The conversion of St. Paul was entire, perfect, constant. It was entire; for at once he turned to God with all the strength of his soul, he offered and gave himself without reserve, with all his faculties and powers, to devote them solely to know, to love and glorify our Lord Jesus Christ. He said: “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” He subjected himself to His supreme will, to His good pleasure; he offered himself for everything, he excepted nothing; he presented himself to do all and to suffer all. His conversion was perfect; for during the three days he remained without eating or drinking, our Lord, who was Himself his Master, enlightened his understanding and revealed to him all the mysteries of His holy life; perhaps it was on this occasion that, ravished to the third heaven, he heard secrets which he was not permitted to utter (2 Cor. XII, 4). Then he was entirely changed and raised to the highest degree of apostolic perfection; and all that the apostles

learned from Jesus conversing here below, St. Paul learned from Jesus triumphant and glorious in heaven. Therefore he said he was taught, not by men, but by God Himself (Gal. I, 12). Finally, his conversion was constant and permanent. St. Paul began where many other saints ended, he was converted to Jesus so completely and so fervently, that he was never afterwards separated from Him: an admirable conversion which should be the model of ours. O Jesus, may our conversion be Thy work, render it complete, perfect and irrevocable; and, with hearts always faithful and ready to obey Thee, may we say with Thy apostle, unceasingly and under all circumstances: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

Feast of St. Francis de Sales, Bishop and Doctor.

J a n u a r y 29th.

I. POINT.

"Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Jesus Christ."

(1 Cor. IV, 16.)

The glory of the saints is more or less great in heaven, as they here below more or less resembled our Lord, who is the perfect model of all the predestined (Rom. VIII, 29). What saint was ever seen who bore His features, and who imitated His virtues more strikingly and more brilliantly, than St. Francis de Sales! He was endowed with an excellent disposition, and could say with the wisest of kings, that he had received from God "a good soul" (Wis. VIII, 19). But what care he took to cultivate it, and preserve it in uprightness, in innocence and justice, by avoiding all sin! He had so great a horror of the least offence against God, that he fled from even the shadow of sin, and in so far as human weakness permits, it might have been

said of him, as Jesus Christ said of Himself: "Who among you shall convince Me of sin?" (John VIII, 46). Our Divine Master, who is impeccable by nature, protected His servant with a grace so abundant, that he seemed not to have sinned in Adam. His heart was inaccessible to sin, and impenetrable to temptations the most subtle, the strongest and the most seductive. Of this his life furnishes many proofs. The elevation and the uprightness of his soul made him superior to all the stratagems and dissimulations of falsehood; he knew that God hates a double heart and deceitful lips (Eccli. II, 14), and that He loved Job, because he was "simple and upright" (Job II, 3). He had an ardent love for justice, and to it he sacrificed his dearest interests; he gave to every one his due, and wished that others should do the same. He practised rigorous justice towards himself, examining himself with exact vigilance and excusing nothing; but as to others, his maxim was that we should be more merciful than just. Mercy and justice were admirably united in his person: he chastised his innocent body to bring it into subjection (1 Cor. IX, 27); he always held his soul in his hands (Ps. CXVIII, 109), lest it should be snatched from him, or lest some outburst of passion should tarnish its purity. He repressed the emotions of anger so perfectly, that he deserved the eulogy which the Sacred Text gives to Moses, that he was "the meekest of all men" (Numb. XII, 3); therefore, like him, he was loved by God and men (Eccli. XLVI, 1). This great saint, always equal to himself in the different conditions of his life, showed himself the servant of God in honor and dishonor, in praise and calumny: in adversity as in prosperity (2 Cor. VI, 4) he referred all to the glory of God, and made everything the matter and the subject of his sacrifices to the Divine Majesty.

II. POINT.

“The charity of Christ presseth us” (2 Cor. V, 14). If, according to the expression of St. Paul, St. Francis de Sales appeared to be clothed with Jesus Christ, that is, His spirit, His maxims and all His virtues, charity was their source. He was urged and animated by it; he was a seraph on earth; he breathed only the love of God, the glory and sanctification of His name: his charity caused him to despise earthly goods and greatness. One day, when in danger of losing all his revenues, he said: the less I shall have of temporal things, the more I shall endeavor to become spiritual. He always preferred his poor church of Geneva to the first episcopal see of Europe, and being urged to accept the Cardinal’s hat, he protested that he did not wish his robes to be dyed with any purple, but that of his own blood, which he was always ready to shed by martyrdom for the salvation of his people and the faith of Jesus Christ. How ardently he would have hastened to sacrifice his life! A thousand times he exposed it by braving the fury of the enemies of God, who regarded him as their most powerful adversary; a thousand times he ran the risk of losing it by the severe cold of the night, in the midst of mountains covered with snow; a thousand times he braved almost certain death, to seek after stray sheep in the very centre of error, in the strongest intrenchments of heresy, and to lead them back to the fold of the supreme Shepherd. By his care, his instructions and good example, he converted more than seventy thousand of these wandering sheep. How great was his pastoral vigilance to preserve the faithful sheep, to move sinners and to sanctify them, to reform the clergy, and excite new fervor among religious, who everywhere sought his advice and direction. Always animated and

guided by a supreme and supernatural wisdom, his meekness was equally strong and efficacious (Wis. VIII, 1). His love rendered him indefatigable; he was always active, preaching, directing, writing, or rather, love did all these things in him. In his weariness, his rest was to raise chosen souls to the perfection of charity. For their benefit, he composed the "Introduction to a Devout Life", by which he led thousands of souls to God, from almost every country in the world, this truly divine book having been translated into very many languages. The most ardent charity dictated his "Treatise on the Love of God", a work at once so tender, so learned, so sublime and so proper to kindle and feed the fire of holy charity: his only ambition was to inflame all hearts with this sacred fire (Luke XII, 49). This burning zeal inspired him to found the admirable Order of the Visitation. This pious Congregation offers an asylum to persons of a delicate constitution, or weakened by age, as well as to those who are strong and vigorous. In proportion to their strength and with equal ardor, they all strive for the perfection of holy love, their only end and their cherished law; in which they advance every day by contempt of the world, of its seductive attractions and false splendor, by an humble and hidden life, by continual crucifixion of the old man. In these holy retreats self-love is ignored; there numerous bands of widows and pure virgins follow the Divine Lamb in the narrow paths of a universal despoilment and complete mortification of the interior and exterior senses; there they become, according to the intention of their holy Founder, so many victims and holocausts consumed by the flames of the most lively charity, with no desire but to please God, with no will but to accomplish His. O Jesus, kindle in our hearts some sparks

of the divine flames which burned in that of Thy blessed servant; make us love Thy will, that we may resign and conform ourselves to it in all things.

III. POINT.

He “became all things to all men, that he might save all” (1 Cor. IX, 22). Such is the eulogy which the Church, always inspired by the Holy Ghost, applies to St. Francis de Sales: it is admirably verified in the whole history of his life. It describes him to us doing good to all, humbling and accommodating himself to all, and by his conduct saying with St. Paul: “My heart is enlarged for you all” (2 Cor. VI, 11). His maxim was, that we must do all and suffer all for our neighbor, except lose our souls. Was there any one whose miseries he did not compassionate, whose interests he did not share? He wept with those who wept, and rejoiced with those who rejoiced (Rom. XII, 15). He bewailed sin with the penitent; he was weak with the weak, little with the little; he supported the weak and animated the strong (2 Cor. XI, 29); he rose with great souls, and lowered himself to the level of the less exalted. St. Francis de Sales was the living image of his dear Master, “who willeth that all men should be saved” (1 Tim. II, 4), “who died for the salvation of all” (2 Cor. V, 15), who causes all to feel the intense heat of His immense charity, who said to all: “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you” (Mat. XI, 28). St. Francis never excluded any one from his heart or his care, poor or rich, great or lowly, learned or ignorant, of whatever age, sex or condition, all were assisted and consoled. He never had any enemies, but his merit, his virtue and his reputation drew upon him envy and calumny; then his charity shone more brightly, as it appeared more pure

and ingenuous. All these malicious falsehoods, all these calumnious accusations, not only could not extinguish the fire of charity with which he was inflamed, but they could not even diminish its ardor (Cant. VIII, 7). Thus he was victorious over himself. His calumniators, converted and won by the force of his charity, patience and meekness, rendered him justice, became his panegyrists and his friends. "Peaceable with those who hated peace" (Ps. CXIX, 6), he instilled it into their hearts and established it everywhere. O great saint, make us feel the effects of thy charity; may it extend to us, to sanctify us and raise us to the perfection of holy love!

The Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

F E B R U A R Y 2 n d .

I. POINT.

"The days of Mary's purification being accomplished."

(Luke II, 22.)

What can this feast be, which is called the Purification of Mary? Mary was the Mother of the Sovereign Purity, the Mother of the Author of all holiness, the purest of all virgins, a virgin before, during and after her delivery; a virgin whose motherhood even consecrated her virginity and rendered it purer, more brilliant and perfect. Therefore Mary was not bound by the Mosaic law of purification. It is true, says St. Bernard, that the law of purification was not, strictly speaking, made for thee; but, O pure Virgin, did thy Son need circumcision? Following His example, thou dost wish to become the lowliest of women, humbling thyself with them, as He humbled Himself among the children of Adam, accepting the cruel and shameful remedy which was to heal them. Let us learn from the

Mother and the Son, to humble ourselves, not to fear to appear what we are, to suffer at least that which we deserve, and to purify ourselves from the stains of sin. St. Francis de Sales says this is the work of our whole life; and as we commit fresh sins every hour, we ought never to be weary of washing them away and effacing their shameful stains with the water of our tears, and the humiliation of a sincere repentance.

II. POINT.

The Blessed Virgin enters into the Temple, and there she offers as a sacrifice to God all that she holds most dear, all that is most precious to her; she presents to God a God, to the Eternal Father His only Son, the Lamb holy and spotless to Him who is infinitely holy. God had been waiting for this adorable Victim during many ages: "the Victim that was slain from the beginning of the world" (Apoc. XIII, 8); the Victim called pre-eminently "a clean oblation" (Mal. I, 11), from whom all the others derived their merit, having been regarded and accepted by God only as figures of this One; a Victim that imparts value to those that are offered even at this day. No victim can please God, if not united to Jesus, or rather if it is not commingled and made identical with Him. Let us, then, unite ourselves with Jesus Christ; may He dwell in our hearts by faith. Let us draw His Spirit within us, that, in offering ourselves to God, we may offer to Him God Himself, that is, Jesus Christ living and reigning in us, triumphing in us and over us, by the voluntary sacrifice which we ought to present to Him unceasingly, of all that we are, and all that we hold most dear.

III. POINT.

"Simeon received Him into his arms" (Luke II, 28). This blessed old man, overjoyed to see and em-

brace Him, whose coming and manifestation he had longed for with such lively faith, and so ardently desired, exclaims in holy rapture: "Now, O Lord, lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, since mine eyes have seen Thy Salvation" (Luke II, 29). Such is the disposition which the Divine Eucharist should produce in us. In it we receive the same God, whom St. Simeon receives to-day, with this difference, that he received Him mortal and hidden under the veils of His humanity and His humble infancy, and we receive Him immortal and glorious, although veiled under the species of the Sacrament. He received Him into his arms, and we receive Him into our souls, into our very hearts; he received Him before He had died for him, and we receive Him after He has given His life and sacrificed Himself for us by suffering and dying on the Cross. Jesus Christ nourishes us with the same body which He made a victim for our salvation, and with the same blood which He shed for our justification; finally, this holy man received Jesus Christ only once, and we receive Him so frequently. The God of goodness becomes our nourishment, to sustain our spiritual life, to be our Viaticum, to strengthen us, to guide us to heaven, the blessed land of the living. Are we not bound more strictly than Simeon, to detach ourselves from this mortal life and all the false attractions which it presents to us? Ought we not, like him, to disdain all other goods, having received this singular Good, this inestimable Treasure, which contains all true goods, Jesus Christ our Lord, our Saviour and our God.

St. Matthias, Apostle.

February 24th.

I. POINT.

"One of these must be made a witness with us of His resurrection."
(Acts I, 22.)

God, having from all eternity foreseen the apostacy of Judas, had resolved in His eternal Counsel to substitute for him a new apostle, as it is written: "Let his days be shortened, and let another take his bishopric" (Ps. CVIII, 8). "My word shall not return to Me void" (Is. LV, 11); it will serve for His designs, as He assures us. The grace of God will never perish; but it will be taken from him who abuses it, to be given to another who will bring forth fruit (Mat. XXI, 43). The gentiles received the salvation which had been offered to the Jews (Rom. XI, 11), because they refused it and rendered themselves unworthy of it. St. Matthias is honored to-day with the apostleship, because of the desertion of Judas: the latter falls, and the former is exalted upon his ruin. He receives the spirit, the holiness, the power and all the other graces of the apostleship, which that perfidious traitor had lost; he is established in his place, and merits and receives the crown of glory, prepared for the apostles: a dreadful judgment on Judas condemned, a most precious mercy to Matthias elected and chosen! And this should make one tremble even in the most exalted position, in the most holy vocation. If we are unfaithful, if we do not correspond carefully with grace, if we do not fulfil all our duties, let us hear with trembling, and let us profit by this warning of Jesus. "Hold fast that which thou hast, lest another take thy crown" (Apoc. III, 11).

II. POINT.

"Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all, show

us him whom Thou hast chosen" (Acts I, 24). Our ruin comes from ourselves, we can reproach none but ourselves for it; but our salvation comes from God alone (Osee XIII, 9). He calls us with a goodness wholly gratuitous: "for it is not by the works of justice which we have done, but by His great mercy, that He hath saved us" (Tit. III, 5); and Jesus said to His apostles: "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen and appointed you, that you should bring forth fruit, and your fruit should remain" (John XV, 16). How many thousands of souls converted to the faith have been the fruit of the preaching and the labors of St. Matthias! Their eternal predestination was contained in His election. "Blessed be Thou, O Lord, who hast made us participators in the lot of the saints" (Col. I, 12). Enable us to draw our own sanctification from their merits, from their virtue and holiness, by following their teachings and examples; may we learn from them to undertake nothing without consulting Thee and saying to Thee, animated with humble confidence: O Lord, make us know Thy will, render us prompt and faithful to execute it.

III. POINT.

"The lot fell on Matthias" (Acts I, 26). Our vocation is in the hands of God, as David says: "My lot is in Thy hands" (Ps. XXX, 16). The disciples, inspired by God, presented two—"Barsabas, surnamed the just, and Matthias" (Acts I, 23). Who would not have thought that the lot would fall upon the first, whose reputation was so well established? But man sees only what appears without, and God penetrates the interior of hearts (1 Par. XXVIII, 9); He disposes of His creatures as it pleases Him, and according to the rules of His sovereign equity,—rules which are often

hidden from us. Let us exclaim with St. Paul: "O the depth of the riches and the knowledge of God! Who hath known the thoughts of the Lord, or who hath been His counsellor?" (Rom. XI, 34). We recognize this in St. Matthias. His merit is manifested by this, that he is preferred by the choice of heaven, although he had so concealed his grace and his holiness, that another appeared more worthy. The Church seems to wish to make us understand this in the Gospel of the day, in which Jesus says to His Father: "I give Thee thanks, that Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and hast revealed them to the little ones" (Mat. XI, 25). And addressing Himself to His disciples, He says: "Learn of Me, that I am meek and humble of heart" (Mat. XI, 29). O great saint, obtain for us grace to humble ourselves with Jesus, and to hide ourselves with thee, that we may share in Thy elevation and glory.

St. Joseph.

March 19th.

I. POINT.

"The Spouse of Mary, of whom Jesus was born."

(Mat. I, 16.)

As the sun is never so well represented as when it is reflected in a mirror, or in a pure and tranquil lake, so the Most Adorable Trinity, who cannot be comprehended by our understanding, nor worthily expressed by our words, found expression in the three holy personages, united in the stable of Bethlehem: there we see a trinity on earth, representing and adoring the Trinity in heaven. We adore in heaven the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, three Persons in one essence, and on earth we honor Jesus, Mary and Joseph, three persons in one heart, in one same love. In the

Divine Trinity the Son of God is between the Father and the Holy Ghost; in the earthly trinity Jesus is between Mary and Joseph, as the sacred bond and the chaste delight of both. The first excellence of St. Joseph consists in the close relationship with the Adorable Trinity, who chose him for the execution of the heavenly designs, and made to him a rich communication of the divine perfections. Let us unite ourselves to Jesus, Mary and Joseph, to render to the Most Holy Trinity, in union with them, the most worthy homage that could ever be received from earth. O great saint, after Mary, the first adorer of the Word incarnate for us, by thee and with thee may I begin to adore God "in spirit and in truth" (John IV, 24).

II. POINT.

"The Spouse of Mary of whom Jesus was born." The second excellence and prerogative of St. Joseph, an excellence and prerogative which is the base and foundation of all the others, is that he was the foster-father of Jesus Christ our Lord. Not only was he regarded by men as the father of Jesus, but the Holy Ghost calls him in a peculiar sense the father of Jesus, and the Blessed Virgin, inspired by God, gives him this name: "Thy father and I" (Luke II, 48). Joseph was not only the guardian, the teacher and the foster-father of the childhood of Jesus, but he participated in the divine paternity in His regard. The eternal Father made him bear His likeness, communicated to him His rights, "rendered him the expression of Himself", as St. Ambrose says; and Jesus did not disdain to obey him as a dutiful and respectful son. An eminent dignity in St. Joseph, which was not given to the highest angels, nor to the greatest saints, which places him in a singular relation with God the Father; which gives

him, for the time, a power almost above the power of Jesus, to whom, however, all power was given in heaven and on earth (Mat. XXVIII, 18); for if the empire of the Man-God extends to all that is created, yet, by an ineffable mystery, St. Joseph exercises his authority over God, over the Creator, over the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth: similar in this to the eternal Father, who never exercised His power over a subject more worthy than His incarnate Son. O abasement of Jesus, most worthy of love and gratitude! O greatness of Joseph, which should inspire us with esteem and the most perfect confidence. O great saint, employ in our favor thy credit with Jesus.

III. POINT.

“The Spouse of Mary, of whom Jesus was born.” This is an abridged eulogy of St. Joseph, the third excellence of this holy patriarch, which consists in an incomparable holiness; for if, to render a marriage perfect, a certain correspondence of position should exist between the parties, the union of Mary and Joseph having been made by a special providence of God, the Divine Wisdom could not fail to pour upon St. Joseph a superabundance of grace, suitable to the excellent dignity of spouse of the Virgin Mother of God. But what was the increase of grace which he received by this holy union and his long intercourse with Mary, a vessel of purity, a mirror of all holiness? “Joseph was a just man” (Mat. I, 19), according to the testimony of the Gospel. What progress, what advance in justice did he not daily make, contemplating every day “the Sun of Justice”, and receiving His salutary and heavenly influences? Hence his firmness in the most severe trials, his invincible courage, his constancy of mind and heart amid different events; his obedience prompt, blind, and

without excuse; his profound humility, which concealed all his greatness from others and even from himself. His angelic purity, his silence, his patience, his continual prayer, his respect for Mary, his conscientiousness and piety, and his love for Jesus, his zeal for His glory, his eagerness to serve Him. O great saint, may I contemplate thee, as thou didst contemplate Jesus and Mary. As thou didst become a perfect imitator of their virtues, may I endeavor, in my turn, to walk in thy steps and follow thy example, that through thee I too may be received favorably by Jesus and Mary.

St. Benedict.

March 21st.

I. POINT.

"Blessed is the man who hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly." (Ps. I, 1.)

These words applied to Jesus Christ as the Head of all the predestined, may be applied also to those who are His members, and especially to the most illustrious, who have followed and imitated Him most closely. In His mortal life, Jesus laid the foundations of all the states of the Christian life; of the hidden life, humble and unknown in the first thirty years; of the apostolic and public life in the last three; of a solitary life in His retreat in the desert and on the mountains, where He generally spent the nights in prayer; of a laborious and penitential life, in His labors, in His journeys, in the mortification of His life and in His death; finally, of a virtue constant and always uniform, in applause or humiliation, in the esteem or contempt of men, in action or contemplation; so that He said to all: "I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also" (John XIII, 15). This is the voice that St.

Benedict heard; and to follow it more exactly, he closed his ears to the enchantments of the world, and did not listen to its counsels; attentive only to those of Jesus Christ, he left all to obey Him and to follow Him in the different paths which He traced for us, in the different ages and conditions of His life. This great saint consecrated himself to Him from the beginning; and his life became a tissue of all the virtues of the Man-God, whose humble and hidden life he especially endeavored to imitate. Blessed is he who, like him, escapes from the seductions of the deceitful world, to listen only to Jesus Christ, and to be filled with His spirit and maxims!

II. POINT.

“His will is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he shall meditate day and night” (Ps. I, 2). Thus David expressed himself, when speaking of the just man, and addressing himself to God, he said: “Lord, my portion is to keep Thy law” (Ps. CXVIII, 57). It was to meditate more attentively, and to practise more perfectly the law of the Lord, that St. Benedict, despising the world with its vain and seductive attractions, separated himself from it, shut himself up in a cave, burying himself alive, as it were, to live on earth as if he were in heaven, conversing only with the angels. The world, according to the testimony of St. Gregory, who was his disciple, appeared to him with all its glory, as an insignificant point, unworthy to fix his attention; he triumphed gloriously over all vanity, hiding himself, that he might not be known; he ever maintained himself in the presence of God, and being filled with Him, God was the only object of his thoughts and desires. God was his food and his element. His prayer was so powerful, that it cast out devils, banished temptations,

wrought all kinds of miracles and obtained every thing from God. O spirit of humility, silence, retreat, prayer, hatred of the world and separation from it, which we ought to imitate in this great saint, after having learned from St. James, that the love of the world is a spiritual adultery, and that whoever loves it, "is an enemy of God" (James IV, 4).

III. POINT.

"He shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season" (Ps. I, 3). St. Benedict leading a life humble and penitent, hidden, invisible to men, as the root of the tree which is covered and hidden in the ground, was secretly nourished with the waters of grace. Always near God, who is its source, always united to God, who is pleased to pour this "free rain" (Ps. LXVII, 10) abundantly on the humble, he became a fruitful tree, which brings forth its fruit in due season, filling almost the whole world with his children and his disciples. He was "the wise and faithful servant", who, faithful to the directions of his Master, distributes wheat only in due season (Luke XII, 42); he chose the state of silence and solitude, he was seated there as in the lowest place, until his Lord bade him "go up higher" (Luke XIV, 10), that he might become the master and father of a numerous posterity. Might not this posterity be compared, like that of Abraham, to "the stars of heaven and the sand that is by the sea-shore"? (Gen. XXII, 17). How great was the zeal of St. Benedict to instruct his spiritual children, and to raise them to the highest point of evangelical perfection! After having overthrown the idols, destroyed the temples of the devil by his prayers, he enlightened the infidels with the light of faith, built churches to the true God, and marvellously

extended the divine glory by the establishment and propagation of his holy Order, In it how many thousands of holy men and women have honored and served God by a generous contempt of human greatness, by a life of retreat and high contemplation, by penance, labors and mortifications, by fervent zeal for monastic perfection, and, above all, by the public celebration of the praises of God, an angelic function, imitating the constant occupation of the heavenly spirits, who cease not, day and night, to pray to God, to praise Him and celebrate His greatness. Choirs of religious are a true heaven, where souls consecrated to God, uniting in the concerts of the Seraphim, chant in the sanctuary the divine canticle of His holiness. O Jesus, Holy of holies, excite, renew in Thy Church the spirit of Thy blessed servant; grant that, after his example and with Thy apostle, we may look upon all worldly possessions as filth and dung, that we may love Thee above all things and gain Thee (Phil. III, 8). Grant that, emancipated from the cares, or at least from the anxieties and love of temporal things, we may desire only eternal riches; grant that we may apply ourselves here below to Thee alone, and to meditation on Thy law, to direct all our care to the faithful observance of Thy holy law, to lay aside every affection, and to renounce ourselves, that we may become Thy true disciples and possess Thee eternally, after having loved, praised and served Thee in this exile with fervor, fidelity and perseverance.

The Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

M a r c h 25th.

I. POINT.

“The angel Gabriel was sent by God.”

(Luke I, 26.)

God, in the elevation of His thoughts, in the depth

of His counsels, and in the excess of His love, resolved to give us His Son. To attain this end, He destined and chose a virgin to be His mother, and consequently prepared for this Virgin-Mother an abundance of graces suitable and corresponding to so sublime a vocation. Thoughts of peace (Jer, XXIX, 11) and consolation, salutary counsel, ineffable and perpetual charity, the first sources of our happiness! To execute this eternal design of mercy, the angel was sent to Mary; he salutes her, he describes her excellence, calling her "full of grace"; her present happiness, adding: "The Lord is with thee"; and her future dignity, saying to her: "Thou shalt bring forth a Son, who shall be the Son of God, the Son of the Most High" (Luke I, 27 and 31). He tells her His name which expresses His office, that is, to save the world; he shows her how the mystery was to be accomplished by the divine and almighty operation of the Holy Ghost. O Blessed Virgin, impart to us of the fulness of thy grace. May the Lord, who is in us by His essence, His presence and His power, be with us by His grace, His love and that holy charity which unites the just with Him! This is the difference, remarks a Father of the Church. God is *in* all men, but He is only *with* the just, whom He protects, governs and loves; thus it is said of Enoch and Noah: "He walked with God" (Gen. V, 22); and Jeremiah says: "The Lord is with me, as a strong warrior" (Jer. XX, 11); and Jesus says of Himself: "He who hath sent Me, is with Me" (John VIII, 29). O pure Virgin, grant that, like thee, I may conceive in my heart, by faith and love, Him, whom thy faith made thee merit to conceive in thy womb by becoming His Mother, and may I render myself worthy to receive the salvation which He came to bring to the world.

II. POINT.

“Hail, full of grace” (Luke I, 28). The fulness of grace contains an assemblage of perfections and virtues; all of which are seen resplendent in the blessed Mary. First, a virginal fear and modesty, which are a gift of the Holy Ghost, and “the beginning of wisdom” (Ps. CX, 10); for she was troubled by the apparition of the angel and the praises which he bestowed on her. Secondly, a confidence joined to an invariable resolution to preserve her virginity; thirdly, a perfect submission, a profound humility, which made her always cherish the character of “handmaid of the Lord” (Luke I, 38), even when she saw herself about to become His Mother; a humility which was the base and foundation of her sublime elevation; finally, how great were her faith, her resignation, her prompt and fervent obedience, and all the other holy dispositions which she manifested in this mystery, without speaking of what was hidden in her heart, all aglow with love for her God, in the silence and recollection of her retreat! O Mary, depository of the favors of heaven, Spouse of the Holy Ghost, adorned with all His gifts! The Church is astonished and exclaims: What, Lord, Thou didst not abhor the Virgin’s womb! And what shall we think, sinners as we are, we, so far from thy purity, and so devoid of the virtues that shine in thee, when we are invited to the heavenly table, there to receive the same God, who became man in thy womb! Into what an abyss of compunction, of respect, of annihilation should we be plunged! Vouchsafe, at least, O Blessed Virgin, to unite us to thee, and make us participate in thy ineffable dispositions.

III. POINT.

“Be it done to me according to thy word” (Luke I, 38). At the moment when Mary pronounced these

words, and gave her consent, "the Word was made flesh" (John I, 14). The Holy Ghost from the most pure blood of this Virgin formed a body to which He added a soul, created from nothing; and the Word hypostatically assumed this body and this soul, that is, perfect human nature, but without its own subsistence or personality, to have its subsistence in the Divine Person. At the same moment, this sacred humanity was filled, sanctified and deified by the divine nature and essence, as a heated iron is penetrated with the qualities and substance of the fire. This union, so intimate, so perfect, of the divinity with the sacred humanity, is the foundation of its merit and dignity, enabling it to act, to suffer, to merit, to satisfy, to glorify God and to sanctify souls. O abasement of God to us, abyss of mysteries! Who will not humble himself before God reduced to nothing for us and in us! Shall not this adorable union of God with nothingness, and with a body in "the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. VIII, 3), produce unions of love and grace, of our will, of our hearts and our minds with Jesus, to live and breathe only in Him and for Him, on this blessed day, which witnesses the descent from heaven of the Saviour so greatly longed for from the beginning of the world, into the womb of a Virgin, who, giving life to Him from whom she received her own being, becomes the Mother of her Creator, and our Mediatrix to intercede for us before the throne of God.

St. Francis of Paula.

April 2nd.

I. POINT.

"The Lord will do the will of them that fear Him, and He will hear their prayer" (Ps. CXLIV, 19).

Man, in the state of original justice, had been

established by God lord over all the earth, and all animals were created to obey and serve him; but after his sin he became subject to all creatures, animate and inanimate; he lost the right not only to command them, but even to make use of them: there is not one which does not rise up against him. St. Paul tells us that it is by compulsion and against their will, that they serve the vanity of sinners: therefore, at the Last Judgment, God will arm them all to avenge Him (Wis. V, 2). Francis of Paula seems to have been re-established in the first privileges of the state of innocence; after having recovered it by divine regeneration in the waters of baptism, he carefully preserved its purity. He began to serve God from the cradle, and he grew in the fear and love of the Lord in proportion as he advanced in years; so that he became the great thaumaturgus of his age. The more he was filled with this holy and salutary fear and with humble submission to God, the greater was his power over creatures; over the sea which he crossed on his cloak as in a safe bark; over fire, handling red hot iron without being scorched, extinguishing the flames of a burning furnace by entering it; in a word, the animals, men, the devils, the elements, diseases, death, all were subject to him, and nothing could resist his will, because he had no other will than that of God. O Lord, to serve Thee is to reign. How good it is to attach ourselves to Thee, and to place all our hope in Thee alone!

II. POINT.

The greatest of the miracles and the works which God accomplished through St. Francis of Paula, was the establishment of a new Order in His Church; an Order, the special characteristic of which is a profound humility. This virtue was the ornament of all the others in the holy Founder: the more God took pleas-

ure in exalting him and distinguishing him by the miracles and wonders which followed him everywhere, by the love and applause of the people, and even of princes and kings, whose esteem and confidence he possessed, the more he abased and humbled himself. To surpass the humility of his patron, St. Francis of Assisi, the illustrious patriarch of the Friars Minor, he wished to have no character, no name for himself and his children, but that of Minim, which signifies all that is lowest and least in the lowest things: thus he was conqueror of the world and of himself, still greater in having triumphed over his passions and all human pride, than in the miraculous and absolute power which he exercised over creatures.

III. POINT.

If St. Francis of Paula had powerful credit with God, he used it only to do good to all. Who did not feel during his life, and after his death, the salutary effects of his charitable intercession? He constrained the divine clemency when on earth, and he still does violence to it in heaven, in favor of the sinners, the poor, the afflicted who have recourse to him. He was penetrated with love for God and the neighbor; his soul was a burning furnace of charity; he won all hearts, and led them all to God; he was merciful to all, severe only to himself; he first practised exactly all the mortifications which he established in his Order, never eating flesh, or anything produced from it. His severe and continual penances were sustained by solitude and prayer, that mysterious oil which renders sweet the yoke of the Lord: therefore, imitating him, his faithful disciples enjoyed the delights of heaven even amid the hardships of an austere life; and their fervor always constant, and accompanied by a holy joy, which is the

consolation of the Church and the edification of the faithful, is a testimony to our Saviour's words: "My yoke is sweet, and My burden light" (Mat. XI, 30).

Our Lady of Good Counsel.

April 26th.

I. POINT.

Mary, the Counsellor of the Catholic Church.

The Church applies to Mary what Holy Writ says of uncreated Wisdom: "I dwell in counsel; . . . the Lord possessed me, before He made any thing" (Prov. VIII, 12, 22); "I made that in the heavens there should rise light that never faileth" (Eccli. XXIV, 6). What is this light, if not the incarnate Word? He communicated to His Mother the splendors of wisdom, of which He is the hearth, so that after His glorious Ascension He might leave her on earth in His place, to confirm the apostles and their disciples in the evangelical doctrine. And, in fact, she resolved their doubts and helped them in difficulties with her counsel. From her high throne in heaven she still continues this charitable office with great solicitude. St. Cyril calls her "the inextinguishable lamp and the support of the orthodox faith". The Church declares that Mary alone has crushed all heresies in the whole world. Is she not for us that luminous column to guide us in the darkness of the night of error? According to St. Germanus, we owe to Mary, after Jesus, the knowledge of our religion. Who can tell what would have become of us without her maternal protection? How many persons brought up in as Christian a manner as ourselves, have suffered shipwreck in their faith! How many others have become victims of fatal illusions! If we have escaped these perils, let us thank Mary for it, for of ourselves

we are only ignorance, pride, corruption and sin. Are we walking in the path of solid virtue? Is our humility real, sincere, unreserved and constant? Is our love for God proof against dryness, disgust and temptations? Do we show ourselves obliging and kind towards our neighbor, even when he displeases, offends and persecutes us? Let us ask Our Lady of Good Counsel to preserve us from the illusion of believing ourselves possessed of virtues which are wholly wanting to us.— O holy Virgin, Mother of the incarnate Wisdom, obtain for me a true knowledge of myself, of my nothingness, of my misery and of my helplessness in the practice of virtue! Preserve me from all presumption, from all indiscretion in my judgments, in my words and in my conduct. May prudence, discernment and counsel guide me in all my ways and lead me safely to Jesus.

II. POINT.

Mary, the Counsellor of the saints.

The Queen of heaven was specially the counsellor of those saints, whom God called to play a great part in the Church, and who, for this reason, were in need of great light. All of them had recourse to the Mother of the incarnate Word, to the Seat of Wisdom, and this not in vain. Among these is St. Dominic, who brought to the Church thousands of heretics, and St. Ignatius, who, before an image of Mary in the grotto at Manresa, received such vivid light, that this light could, for him, have replaced the Sacred Scriptures, if they had been lost. St. Alphonsus, who, during his whole life, cultivated the devotion to Our Lady of Good Counsel, was favored with many apparitions of Mary in the grotto at Scala. When, in his old age, he was asked what she had said to him, he replied: "I sought her counsel in every thing, and she used to tell me such beautiful

things.” Is not the Mother of the incarnate Wisdom able to tell many wonderful things? Has not the Church been illustrated through her with so many religious orders, of which she was the inspiratress and the special directress, such as the orders of Mount Carmel, of St. Francis, of the Servites and of Mercy?—In our turn we shall be enlightened by her; for, in all times Mary has shown herself as the dawn of the Sun of justice, directing towards Jesus upright hearts, hearts loving truth and seeking evangelical perfection. Hence there is no grace which she cannot obtain for those who invoke her with confidence,—vocations to be decided, doubts to be removed, obscurity of mind to be dissipated, studies and examinations to be undergone, counsel to be taken or given, particular light to be obtained, all this is the object of her solicitude, when we have recourse to her with fervor and perseverance.—O Mother of Good Counsel, how often, instead of praying to thee in my doubts, I have chosen, without deliberation, all that flattered my tastes, my whims, my sloth and my self-love! In future I will often invoke thee under thy beautiful title of Mother of Good Counsel, especially in matters pertaining to my conscience; and, moreover, I will daily place myself under thy direction, to learn from thee the secrets of the interior life, the knowledge of myself and of Jesus crucified, and the difficult art of acting always in the spirit of faith. Obtain for me the grace to conform to the advice of the Holy Ghost: “My son, do thou nothing without counsel, and thou shalt not repent when thou hast done” (Eccli. XXXII, 24).

St. Paul of the Cross.

A p r i l 28th.

I. POINT.

*St. Paul of the Cross, devout to the Passion of Christ
from his infancy.*

From his very infancy our saint learned from his pious mother to compassionate the sufferings of our loving Redeemer. Though unacquainted with the methods of prayer, he would, with the light of grace, frequently reflect on the sufferings of the Man-God, contemplating the image of the crucifix. He could not look at it without becoming deeply moved and shedding abundant tears. Charmed with his precocious devotion, our Saviour several times appeared to him, at one time His head crowned with thorns and His face all bruised, at other times His body torn and bloody and His flesh lacerated. This heart-rending sight would throw our young saint into a kind of agony, and fill him with a longing to suffer and immolate himself for Jesus. He thenceforth began to mortify his taste, his innocent flesh, sleeping on a bare board, taking the discipline, and spending a part of the nights in meditating on Jesus Christ crucified. On Fridays especially he would exercise the most astonishing rigors against himself. Even before he was old enough to make his first holy Communion, he would already gather around him his little brothers and sisters, and preach to them on the death of the Redeemer with so much unction, as to make them cry and sob aloud. Thus did God prepare him to found one day a religious order, the end of which would be to convert men by preaching Jesus Christ crucified. Our saint's tender and precocious devotion to our suffering Redeemer teaches us an important lesson. Our Lord suffered for us as well as for him; He

sacrificed His glory by embracing ignominy; He veiled His wisdom under the apparent folly of the cross. Possessing almighty power, He fell down under the weight of His cross; and though He was infinite holiness itself, He did not shrink from taking all our iniquities upon Himself. O charity, which should forever move our hearts! How can we remain insensible to the fearful pains of the incarnate Innocence dying to save our guilty souls! —O Jesus crucified, I prostrate myself before Thee; by the wounds of Thy sacred feet, deign to inspire me with the most lively repentance; by the merit of Thy pierced hands, give me strength to labor efficaciously at my salvation; enable me to draw from Thy divine Heart, by means of prayer, courage to overcome myself, to bear with my neighbor, to pardon injuries, to overcome temptation, so that I may testify my love for Thee by saying in truth: “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal. VI, 14).

II. POINT.

St. Paul of the Cross, sanctified by meditating on the Passion.

The Saviour's Passion was for our saint a principle of purification, of progress and perfection in virtue. He would say of it, that it is the shortest, the simplest and the surest way to strip one's self of the old man and to put on the new, for we therein learn to die to self and to all that is not God. As progress in virtue depends, in a special manner, on the exercise of mental prayer, he always began his meditations with a mystery of the Saviour's Passion, and strove even never to lose sight of Jesus crucified, his divine model. In the ocean of Christ's ineffable sufferings he would fish, as he expressed it, for the pearl of the virtues, appropriating to himself his Master's sufferings. As the moth, flut-

tering around a flame, ends by casting itself into it, so our soul, he said, after having long fluttered by its affections, its sentiments of humility, faith and love, around Jesus on the cross, the divine light, will in the end be absorbed wholly in Him. According to St. James (C. I, v. 4), patience completes the work of our perfection. Hence our saint was not content with merely meditating on Jesus crucified, he also shared in His sufferings. During fifty years, with the exception of rare intervals, he was afflicted with frightful darkness, aridity and desolation. In this state he humbled himself under the Lord's hand, in conformity with his divine Master. Hence he practised all the virtues that led to his canonisation, thus sanctifying himself by meditating on the Passion and carrying his daily cross. We also can sanctify ourselves in like manner, for there is no better means of becoming holy, since it is the mystical crucible for purifying souls, for rendering them pleasing to God, for imparting value to their works and merit to their virtues.—O Jesus, our cross, borne in union with Thine, is as an altar on which we sacrifice to Thy love our vices, our defects, our lusts, our inclination to evil. It is the chisel which fashions and renews in us Thy image, disfigured by sin; it is the brush which touches up and perfects Thy divine portrait in us. Grant that I may often remember Thy bitter Passion, and be perfectly resigned in my daily difficulties and contradictions. O Mother of sorrows, obtain for me that I may glory only in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

St. Philip and St. James, Apostles.**M a y 1st.****I. POINT.**

“James, the servant of God and of Jesus Christ our Lord.”

(James I, 1.)

Such is the character in which this apostle glories. He was commonly called “brother of the Lord”, because he was a near relative of Jesus; but he belonged to Him still more by the bonds of the spirit and of charity, having loved Him and followed Him constantly and faithfully. He was also thus called, because he resembled the Saviour in countenance, and still more because of the conformity of his manners and conduct, in which were seen all the virtues of Jesus Christ; therefore he was surnamed *the Just*, and many Fathers have written that he was sanctified from his mother’s womb, and that he always remained a virgin. He practised austere penance, walking barefoot, fasting every day on bread and water, which he mingled and steeped with his tears; he prayed day and night, and often with his face to the ground, on account of which his forehead and knees had become callous. He had such a reputation for holiness, that people were eager to touch and kiss the hem of his garment, and he alone was permitted to enter the Holy of holies. Finally, this blessed apostle, having imitated Jesus during his life, ended it as He did, by the confession of His Divinity, and he died, like Him, saying for those who put him to death: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke XXIII, 34). O holy apostle, may thy exemplary life animate us to imitate thee, as thou didst imitate Jesus Christ! Thou, who, being just, didst practise such severe penance, obtain for us grace to weep over our sins, and to humble ourselves, that, being

sînners, we may not shun suffering and that salutary penance which alone can render us just.

II. POINT.

“We have found the Messias” (John I, 41). These are the first words which the Gospel relates of St. Philip. This apostle had been first found by Jesus, and called to follow Him; he corresponded to the call, leaving all things to obey Him, and by his fidelity he rendered himself worthy to know and esteem the inestimable happiness of finding Jesus. As it is written: “They that drink Me, shall yet thirst” (Eccli. XXIV, 29), that is, the more we know Him, the more we desire to know Him; the more we taste and possess Him, the more we hunger to taste and possess Him still more. St. Philip, having these happy dispositions and penetrated with gratitude for having found Him, said to Jesus: “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us” (John XIV, 8). This is the end of our life, the beatitude of our eternity, the object of the coming and the labors of Jesus on earth; that He might show us the Father, and that we might know Him with the Son and the Holy Ghost. Jesus said to His Father: “This is eternal life, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent” (John XVII, 3). O truly apostolic petition and desire! “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” The world, with all that it contains, is only vanity; it cannot fill the void of our desires, it cannot fill the vast capacity of our hearts. Thou, O Jesus, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, art the only object capable of satisfying us and satisfying all our longings.

III. POINT.

“Philip, he that seeth Me, seeth the Father also . . . I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me” (John

XIV, 9 and 10). “No one can come to the Father, but by Me, and no one can come to Me, unless the Father draw him” (John VI, 44). Thus the Father and the Son mutually glorify each other; and, by an adorable exchange, the Father draws us to the Son, and the Son guides us to the Father: the Father is in the Son, and the Son is in the Father by unity of essence, and by a union continual, divine and incomprehensible; from which it follows that the Father cannot be seen without the Son, nor the Son without the Father, either by obscure faith in this life, or by clear vision in glory. O Holy Father, make us love and glorify Thy Son, draw us to Him, that in Him and by Him we may render to Thee the honor, the love and glory which belong to Thee. Grant, O Jesus, that we may honor and imitate Thy eternal abode in Thy Father, dwelling in Thee spiritually by a tender and faithful love, which will attract Thee to dwell in us by Thy grace, as Thou hast been pleased to promise to those who receive Thee worthily in Thy august Sacrament. “He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me, and I in him (John VI, 57).

The Invention of the Holy Cross.

M a y 3 r d.

I. POINT.

“Make known among the people the inventions of the Lord.”
(Is. XII, 4.)

The first Invention of the Cross of Jesus was made in heaven; it remained during an eternity hidden in the secret treasures of the Divine Wisdom, “which reacheth from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly” (Wis. VIII, 1). God having resolved, simply by the motive of His goodness, to raise us up

from the fall of sin, found no means more suitable, nor more worthy of His greatness and infinite perfections, than the mystery of the Cross. It was the invention of His justice and holiness, which being attacked and offended by sin, could be satisfied only with the blood and the ignominious and cruel death of a crucified God. What better proof of the greatness and holiness of God than the infinite homage which He demands, than the exact and rigorous satisfaction which He requires for sin; when do the severe and inexorable claims of His justice appear more plainly, than when it is exercised upon His innocent Son, and does not spare the Holy of holies, clothed "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. VIII, 3). O holiness, supremely glorified! O justice, most perfectly satisfied by the admirable Invention of the Cross of the Saviour! O malice, O unworthiness, O grievousness of sin, which it brings to light, and which it should make us detest above all things!

II. POINT.

The Eternal God wished not only to become man, but also to suffer the cruel death of the Cross, to consummate the work of our salvation. The Cross was the invention of His mercy and love: by the Cross, He wished to show us how much He loved us and desired to be loved by us. He showed forth His charity so much the more as He died for us, who were His enemies; He bore all the violence of the wrath of God, justly irritated against sinners, He rained down upon them a deluge of graces and favors, which He merited for us by His patience. Upon the Cross He opened to us and displayed the riches, the immense treasures, the inexhaustible merits of all the labors, of all the humiliations and sufferings of His life and death, that our redemption might be abundant, and that at all times,

during our life and at our death, we might hope in His clemency and goodness. O ineffable invention of love and mercy! How can we worthily acknowledge and correspond with it?

III. POINT.

Finally, the Cross is the invention of the Divine Wisdom. Among all the different kinds of tortures and death, Divine Wisdom chose that of the Cross as the most salutary remedy and the most suitable for our miseries. Jesus, lifted up on the Cross, draws us powerfully to Himself by the strength and the ardor of His charity for us; there He preaches to us forcibly, and teaches us by His example the way to heaven, and especially this important point of His doctrine: "If any one will come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Mat. XVI, 24). By His sufferings He smoothes for us the narrow way leading to life. He is our Model in all the virtues, and we find in His profound humility, in His perfect obedience, in His meekness, His patience, His charity, all that we ought to observe. The prince of the apostles says to us: Jesus "Christ died for us, leaving you an example that you might follow His steps" (1 Pet. II, 21). He wished to confound the devil; and as Satan had conquered by a tree, Jesus Christ resolved that this implacable enemy should be vanquished by another tree, and that we should recover life, where the first Adam had caused us to lose it. O precious and sacred tree of the Cross! Thou art a tree, not of death, but of life (Gen. II, 17); instead of the fruit forbidden under penalty of losing life, thou dost present to us an excellent fruit, which we are commanded to eat, if we wish to have life and to preserve it eternally (John VI, 54).

St. Philip Neri.

MAY 26th.

I. POINT.*St. Philip's Spirit of prayer.*

From his early youth St. Philip took delight in mental prayer, and devoted himself to it with a fervor and constancy far beyond his years. He gave to sleep only the time that was strictly necessary, and his strong attraction to meditation and converse with God served him as an alarm-clock. Often after having visited during the day the seven Roman basilicas, he would spend the night in the catacomb of St. Calixtus to continue his prayer near the tombs of the martyrs. Hence the effects of his prayer were wonderful, for it enabled him to acquire so great a confidence in Jesus Christ, that he thereby wrought many miracles, and so great a flame of divine love, that his heart was enlarged and two of his ribs were broken, forming an arch over his heart to give more space to its throbs. Filled with zeal, he left his cherished retirement in order to labor for the salvation of souls. The fruits of his labors were marvellously abundant. His words, both in the pulpit and in the confessional, were as so many darts of fire to inflame men's hearts with divine love. He founded the Congregation of the Oratory for the spiritual welfare of all classes of society.—Are we, after making mental prayer, more recollected, more penetrated with the presence of God and with the desire to converse with Him amid our occupations? Are we, after our retreats, firmly resolved to avoid certain faults, which hinder our spiritual progress, to combat energetically our defects and evil inclinations, to obey promptly and cheerfully, to bear with patience and meekness contradictions, derision, reproofs and all that wounds our self-love?—O my God,

how far am I from deriving such profit from my meditations and retreats! Grant me the desire to converse with Thee by continual prayer, for in Thee alone I can find, like St. Philip, the prudence which may enable me always to act according to Thy will, and the necessary energy to suffer with resignation and to overcome all obstacles to my union with Thee. "Blessed is the man who . . . shall meditate on the law of the Lord day and night" (Ps. I, 1, 2).

II. POINT.

St. Philip's fidelity to grace.

The spirit of prayer which animated St. Philip accompanied him everywhere, and enabled him to correspond faithfully to the divine light and inspiration. Convinced of his powerlessness to do good, he would often say: "Lord, mistrust me; for without Thy grace, I would betray Thee and commit every sin, however enormous." It was with a lively faith that he represented to himself the majesty of the Creator present in his soul, ever ready to hear his prayers. His filial confidence rendered him ingenious and constant in invoking the divine assistance. Filled with the desire of obtaining the heavenly goods, he incessantly prayed for them as the only goods worthy of our aspirations. Nothing, in fact, is more capable than the supernatural lights of ennobling our mind. The smallest ray of faith is superior to all human science, for it is a reflection of the wisdom of God. No comparison can make us understand the wonders wrought by grace in a heart as docile and faithful as that of our saint. The virtues all seemed natural to him, and embalmed his whole conduct, like the perfumes of a spiritual flower-bed cultivated by the Holy Ghost. His sincere and candid humility, his virginal purity, the sweetness of his inter-

course, his unalterable patience, his loving charity imparting to all peace and contentment, every thing in him was the fruit of his entire and continual submission to the spirit of grace, with which he was filled. Besides this he was endowed with gifts of prophecy, of miracles and of penetrating the hearts of men. All this shows how lavishly God bestows His goods on those who follow His guidance in all things.—Let us resolve never to resist the voice of our conscience, but to yield with simplicity and love to the admonitions, to the remorse, to the inspirations that tend to make us better. How many are lost, who would have been saved, had they corresponded to a first grace! They would thereby have merited a second and a third grace, and many more, which would have formed a mysterious chain to bind them irrevocably to God. But when such a chain is once broken, one is abandoned to his foolish passions, and no one knows where he will stop.—O Jesus, O Mary, you whom St. Philip was wont to call “his love and his delights”, enable me, like him, to follow in all things the interior spirit, that urges me to live recollected and united to the infinite goodness. Repress in me all vain desires, all useless eagerness and pre-occupation. Let nothing in me ever prevent grace from penetrating into my heart, and causing to issue therefrom transports of love and works which may sanctify me, as it did St. Philip, who was always attentive to deny himself and obey you without reserve.

MEDITATIONS ON THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS.

First Friday in December.

The Sacred Heart of Jesus loves the Cross.

I. POINT.

How much Jesus loved the Cross.

Often when conversing familiarly with His apostles, our divine Saviour would open His Heart to them to manifest His love of predilection for suffering. Not content with calling blessed the poor, the weeping and the suffering, He said lovingly: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for My sake. Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven.... I say to you, love your enemies; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you" (Mat. V, 11, 12, 44). What He taught to others, Jesus first practised Himself. He loved the cross as much as He loved our souls. He revealed to St. Bridget, that He would be ready to die as many times as there are souls that are damned, if they were capable of being redeemed. And, in fact, His whole life was an uninterrupted martyrdom on account of the privations, contradictions and interior sufferings He endured for us from the moment of His Incarnation. Having willingly taken upon Himself all the punishments due to us on account of our sins, He even longed

soon to consummate His sacrifice, so sincerely did He love suffering. "With desire", He said to His apostles, "I have desired to eat this Pasch with you, before I suffer" (Luke XXII, 15). And when the hour of His Passion He had so ardently desired, had come, He did not wait until His enemies came to arrest Him, but He went forth to meet them, to meet Judas who was to betray Him, to meet the soldiers who were to bind Him, to revile Him, to lead Him to insults, to cruel torments and to the most shameful and horrible death. It is, therefore, quite befitting that His Sacred Heart should be represented as surmounted by a cross, by a cross devoured by the flames of the most ardent love.— O Jesus, Thou wast not satisfied with suffering all the hardships of Thy life and the pains of Thy Passion, but didst also endure, in foreseeing them, all our trials, so that our afflictions have all passed through Thy divine Heart and thus been wonderfully lightened. By the merits of Thy generous resignation and Thy love of the cross, diminish in me my great repugnance to humiliations and sufferings, for, with Thy help, I will endeavor to bear cheerfully all my daily crosses and trials.

II. POINT.

How we ought to suffer for Jesus Christ.

When the cross was laid on His shoulder, He could have considered the injustice of His condemnation and the heaviness of the burden laid on Him. But He accepted, without discussion, the instrument of His death as coming from His heavenly Father. What a beautiful example for us! Instead of growing sad, of complaining and murmuring at our daily trials, what would not be our merit, if we accepted them cheerfully as coming from God Himself! Notwithstanding His exhaustion, Christ wished to carry His cross to Calvary

without asking for any help. How greatly should we not admire His meekness and silence amid the ill-treatment and the torments and insults heaped upon Him all the way from the Pretorium to Golgotha, although He suffered so much therefrom as to fall several times and nearly die on the way! The wonderful meekness of the immaculate Lamb condemns our impatience in sickness, our anger in contradictions, our habitual horror for all inconvenience and restraint.—Christ's constancy in suffering supported and fortified the martyrs, and enabled them to persevere amid tortures in confessing the name of Jesus. Hence we should not only accept and bear our cross, but allow ourselves to be nailed to it, as He was, until our last breath. With what holy eagerness did not Christ offer His feet and His hands to the nails that were to attach Him to the cross! He suffered a most intense agony, to show us how much He loved us. Let us in all our trials, sufferings and temptations look at the crucifix and take refuge in the loving Heart of Jesus.—O my Lord and God, I will love Thee and hope in Thee so much the more as I shall be afflicted, humbled and surrounded by trials. O Mother of sorrows, help me to love and imitate in my crosses thy loving Son's Heart so full of submission, meekness and constancy in suffering.

First Friday in January.

The Infant Jesus gives us His Heart.

I. POINT.

With what generosity the Infant Jesus gives us His Heart.

From His very birth Jesus gives us His Sacred Heart without reserve. "A Child", says Isaias, "is born to us, and a Son is given to us" (Is. IX, 6). Why does the prophet speak thus, unless it is to inform us

that the incarnate Word is not content with showing Himself to us, but that He is born for us and has become one of us, that He might the better procure our happiness. And to show us the value and immensity of this benefit, the prophet adds: "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, Father of the world to come, the Prince of peace" (Ibid.). What a prodigy of goodness! The Almighty, the Lord of the universe, deigns to lower Himself to us, worms of the earth and unworthy sinners! He deigns to love us, to become our possession, our treasure, our property! O boundless love! The sight of a flower, of a tree, of a fountain, of some beauty of nature was enough to ravish the saints in ecstasy at the thought of God's bounty towards mankind in these material benefits, and shall we remain indifferent at the contemplation of the Creator Himself become, for our sake, the flower of Jesse, the Tree of life, the inexhaustible Source of the graces of salvation?—And with what love does He not communicate Himself to all men, both just and sinners! Already in the stable of Bethlehem He makes Himself all to all, and undertakes to cure all our ills. "If you are wounded", says St. Ambrose, "Jesus is your physician, your remedy. If you suffer from the burning fever of impure passion, He is the purifying and refreshing water that will effect a cure. Whatever your suffering may be, He is ready to relieve it. Whatever your disease may be, He can and wishes to cure you." Let us, then, go to Him, for He has placed Himself at our disposal. He even goes so far as to give Himself entirely to each one of us. Like the sun at the horizon, Jesus, from His very birth, lavishes His light and His favors upon every man with as much generosity as upon the whole earth. "He loved me", says St. Paul, "and

delivered Himself for me" (Gal. II, 20). Each one of us may say the same, and exclaim: Yes, Lord Jesus, divine Infant, Thou already belongest to me, as if I were alone on earth. I may take Thee up in my arms and press Thee to my breast, and even enter, by faith, into Thy Sacred Heart as into my own property, and by prayer draw therefrom strength in combat, peace in trouble, consolation in sadness and courage to conquer myself in order to be faithful to Thy love.

II. POINT.

By what titles the Infant Jesus demands our heart.

The incarnate Word, having given us His Heart from His very appearance in this world, has the full right to demand ours from the very moment we have attained the use of our reason. He requires for Himself the firstlings of our life, because He created us for Himself, and every moment of our life belongs to Him and should be consecrated to Him. It would be a crying injustice, if we were to refuse Him the best years of our life, and reserve for Him only the wretched remains of a life defiled by sin. You perhaps flatter yourself that later you will better practise penance, recollection, prayer, the spirit of faith and charity. But, says the Holy Ghost, "whatever thy hand is able to do, do it earnestly" (Eccles. IX, 10) and at once, for you know not whether you shall see another day, or another hour. The Infant Jesus gave us Himself and His divine Heart without reserve. What right, then, have you to divide yourself among several, you who already belong to Him by the titles of the creation, the redemption and conquest! Measure, if you can, the distance He had to cross to come to you. Was He not obliged to empty Himself, to become poor, a slave, to assume your miseries, your sins, and to undergo the punishment due to

you? And since God sacrificed Himself wholly for man's welfare, is it asking too much of man that he should wholly consecrate himself to the service of God?—The Infant Jesus gives Himself to us irrevocably, for He allows Himself to be swathed, to be circumcised, to be placed in a crib, to signify that He would one day become our prisoner, our victim, our food, and this till the end of the world. O excessive bounty of the Heart of Jesus! O Lord, Thou thus condemnest my want of generosity and my habitual fickleness in Thy service! Some days I begin with fervor to serve Thee, but at the least obstacle, at the smallest sacrifice required of me, I grow negligent and cowardly. My conduct is so inconstant and continually alternates between short fits of fervor and relapses into tepidity and indifference, between good resolutions and fresh falls. O divine Infant Jesus, by the love of Thy Sacred Heart and through the intercession of Mary and Joseph, grant me unwavering fidelity in Thy service from this moment till my last breath.

First Friday in February.

Confidence in the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

I. POINT.

Motives of confidence in the Heart of Jesus.

A son naturally confides in a loving father who, abounding in wealth, delights in enriching his children. A brother will naturally confide in his well-beloved brother, whose generosity, uprightness and exquisitely tender love he well knows. A friend will not mistrust his devoted friend, whose disinterestedness and inviolable fidelity he has experienced on numberless occasions. But Jesus Christ is our most loving Father, our most generous Brother and our most faithful Friend.

He is wise, powerful, wealthy and benevolent beyond all conception; His power of doing us good is inexhaustible. Why, then, do we often hesitate in placing our confidence in Him? Why do we hardly dare to hope that He will hear us, and why do we so seldom abandon ourselves to His guidance? Is Jesus Christ unduly severe and exacting towards those who love Him? Why do we interiorly shudder when we are counselled to place ourselves, our will and all that we have and are, unreservedly at His disposal? It is because we understand but too little the extent of His love for us and our own true interests. If a man of wealth and influence offers us his protection and assistance, we are buoyed up with hope and joy. And here we have the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, who opens his arms to receive and protect us, and presses us to His own Heart, which is open to receive us, and still we hesitate in placing our trust in Him and in abandoning ourselves to His infinite goodness! — O Jesus, I repent of having so often, through fear and indifference, shunned coming to Thee, to pray to Thee, or to receive Thee in holy Communion. I will henceforth place myself unreservedly at Thy disposal, and submit without diffidence my mind to Thy divine wisdom, and my heart to Thy Sacred Heart. Why should I mistrust Him who sought me for thirty-three years, when I was lost, who gave His blood and His life for me, and who still daily immolates Himself for me on our altars, and becomes our prisoner and the food of my soul!

II. POINT.

Generous promises of the Heart of Jesus.

Although the Heart of the Man-God is undoubtedly good and powerful, we should not have unlimited con-

fidence in it, if Christ had not also bound Himself towards us by the most bountiful promises, which He will never fail to keep most faithfully. Fidelity is inseparable from Him, because He is Truth itself. "Heaven and earth shall pass", He says, "but My words shall not pass" (Mat. XXIV, 35). Let us, with all confidence, rely on His promise not to repel us when we go to Him (John VI, 37), to love us, if we love Him (Prov. VIII, 17), and to grant us all we ask of Him (John XIV, 14).—Our divine Saviour has always faithfully kept these consoling promises. Where is the sinner, who, after a fault, nay, after numberless crimes, came to Him repentant, and was rejected by Him? Judas himself would have obtained forgiveness, had he not yielded to despair. Where is the disconsolate soul, who, after visiting Him in the churches where He dwells, and imploring His goodness, did not receive consolation and strength, and feel encouraged to persevere in His love and in confidence in His mercy? If Jesus has so well kept His promises in the past, why should He fail to keep them in the future? We have, then, no excuse for showing any diffidence or fear towards Him, or for our sadness and despondency after committing a fault, when we should only have recourse to Him to obtain our pardon and cure. Let us in all our faults, in all our miseries, in all our wants have recourse in all confidence to the most loving and compassionate Heart of Jesus, and we shall assuredly meet with a loving reception.—O sweet and amiable Heart of my Redeemer, I place all my trust in Thy love for me. Grant me, through the intercession of Thy holy Mother, the grace to place in Thee an unbounded and unalterable confidence, which may serve me as the key to Thy divine treasures.

First Friday in March.**The Most Amiable Heart of Jesus.****I. POINT.***The Heart of Jesus is amiable in itself.*

The beauty of a soul is so ravishing, that he who sees it, necessarily admires and loves it. Who, in fact, can refrain from esteeming and cherishing the innocence, candor, uprightness and simplicity that is seen in the soul of a child? How much more lovely are not these qualities in a saint! The very thought of the interior beauty of a St. Aloysius Gonzaga, of a St. Stanislaus Kostka, of a St. Agnes, of a St. Rose of Viterbo, and of so many virgins as pure as angels, makes in us so sweet and salutary an impression, that it seems to extinguish all fire of concupiscence. Who has not been transported with happiness in meditating on the noble sentiments of those seraphic souls—St. Francis of Assisi and St. Teresa of Jesus? And yet what are all those created beauties in comparison with the uncreated Beauty, that became incarnate among us? It is from the Heart of the Man-God that all the saints without exception have drawn the virtues that render them so amiable to us. It is in that Heart of love that St. John the evangelist went to seek his sublime light and especially his tender and persevering charity. In it St. Augustine, St. Bernard and so many others have found those glowing words which, even after many centuries, are able to move our hard hearts and warm up our icy souls. If the little shoots produce such fruits, what will not be the products of the divine tree itself, that is, the Sacred Heart of Jesus? This Heart, in fact, is the Heart of a God, and, consequently, a shoreless ocean of uncreated perfections. The Heart of God made man supereminently combines in itself all the

beauties of creation.—Being the Heart of our divine Saviour, it is the source of those rivers of grace, which purify the Church suffering, sanctify the Church militant, and inundate with joy the Church triumphant. Who, then, would not love a Heart in which is united all the loveliness of both heaven and earth?—O my God, how can I resist the attractions of Jesus, unless it is because I am ignorant of the treasures of nature, grace and glory concealed in Him? Enlighten me, then, so that I may conceive disgust for all sensual gratification and worldly vanity, in order to cling to Him only and to His Sacred Heart.

II. POINT.

The Heart of Jesus is amiable in His charity towards us.

The Heart of Jesus is not only perfect, or endowed with the purest of all moral beauty, but it is also good, possessing a goodness that delights in conferring benefits, and is thus calculated to win all hearts. Where is there one so wretched, that has not been the object of Christ's compassion, mercy and love? Where is the sinner, even the most ungrateful, that the divine Good Shepherd did not seek as a stray sheep to bring it back to the fold? The parable of the prodigal son is an image of that loving goodness, which not only does not repulse the guilty one that is repentant, but even receives him with love, tenderly embraces him, and celebrates his return with joyous feasts. St. Paulinus, full of charity, sold himself as a slave, in order to redeem from slavery the son of a poor widow. And whence did he acquire such heroic charity? From the Heart of Him who redeemed us all at the price of His blood. Whence did St. Francis de Sales draw his unalterable meekness, and St. Vincent de Paul his prodigious love of his neighbor? Only from the meek and

loving Heart of the Man-God. It is from that Heart of love that have come forth all the grand works of charity, and the Church herself, our Mother. It is in that divine Heart that the saints stripped themselves of man's natural selfishness, to put on the bowels of mercy and to become living copies of Him, who devoted Himself for us so far as to immolate Himself on Calvary and in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass on our altars.—Let us also, after the example of the saints, go to drink plentifully from this fountain of goodness and love. Jesus gave Himself entirely to us with all His treasures. Should we, then, act towards Him in a miserly manner, and divide our affections by loving creatures with a base, sensual and interested love, and not through motives of faith? Let us often make acts of love for our divine Master and transfer them to our conduct by a great charity towards all men, and especially towards those for whom we feel a natural aversion.—O Jesus, grant, through the intercession of Thy loving Mother, that I may live in Thy Sacred Heart as in a sanctuary, in which I may contemplate Thy infinite perfection, or as in a glowing furnace, wherein I may be enkindled with an ardent love for Thee and for my fellow-men. Make my heart conformable to Thine, that is, tender and compassionate for the miseries and sufferings of my neighbor, and full of condescension and generosity to aid, encourage, console and treat with loving care all who may need or implore my help.

First Friday in April.

Charity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

I. POINT.

Charity of the Heart of Jesus during His mortal life.

The Heart of the Man-God is the Heart of the charitable Shepherd who, seeing that one of His hun-

dred sheep had strayed away, left the ninety and nine to seek the lost sheep. The eternal Word leaves the society of the Angels, where He was perfectly happy, and comes upon earth to lead a life of hardship and save ungrateful sinners. Can there be a charity more generous, more disinterested? If the lowest of the seraphim had abased himself to us, we would be greatly moved. How much more should we not be moved at the sight of the King of glory coming down to us to save us! Jesus gave sight to the blind, instructed the ignorant, cured the sick and restored life to the dead; He travelled through towns and villages, preaching and laboring for souls and doing good to all, often dispensing food to the hungry, and always preaching and teaching the doctrines of salvation. His Heart was ever full of compassion for the sufferers, and, although He is the joy of the angels, He wept over the death of Lazarus and the calamities that were to befall Jerusalem. He did not even hesitate to take upon Himself all our sins, as well as the punishments due to them; and heaven contemplated the sight of a God scourged, buffeted, loaded with a heavy cross and dying on it to redeem His guilty creatures.—O charity of the Heart of Jesus, thou condemnest my selfishness, my reluctance to inconvenience myself, to practise self-denial and self-sacrifice, when there is question of assisting my fellow-men, or of serving Thee in the person of my neighbor, and especially of the poor, of the lowly and of the ignorant. O adorable Heart, move my heart, and communicate to it the sentiments of goodness, mercy and condescension with which Thou wast ever animated. Enable me to shun in thought, judgment, word and deed whatever may in the least wound charity.

II. POINT.

Charity of the Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist.

Thirty-three years of sacrifice did not suffice the Heart of our loving Redeemer to testify how much He loves us. He willed to attach Himself inseparably to us by the adorable Eucharist. He, who fills the whole universe by His immensity, deigns to enclose Himself in our churches, in our poor tabernacles and under the most humble species, in order to be always occupied with our welfare. Not wishing to trust others with the care of saving us, He took it upon Himself. How often does He not enlighten, pardon, strengthen and console us and hear our prayers when we go to visit Him! Not content with immolating Himself on Calvary, He perpetuates His sacrifice on thousands of altars, thus multiplying Himself to assist us in our wants. Moreover, in His boundless devotion, He even descends personally into the heart of each one of us, dressing and healing our wounds, applying to us the merit of His blood and restoring health to us by communicating His divine life to us. O ineffable goodness of our Saviour! As the intensity of a fire is known by the amount of heat it throws out, so also we can measure the charity of the Sacred Heart by the great works it has produced for us. Who has ever done for his fellow-man anything comparable to the eucharistic mysteries, in which Jesus Christ lavishes the miracles of His power, showing that He is resolved to save us at any cost. Such an excess of love can proceed only from the Heart of a God. God alone is capable of such boundless devotedness, which will never grow less until the consummation of ages.—O Jesus, because of the desire that urges Thee to load us with goods, Thou invitest us to approach Thee and receive Thee in holy Communion. Thou

sayest to us: "Come, eat My bread, and drink the wine which I have mingled for you" (Prov. IX, 5). O Lord, what couldst Thou, in Thy infinite mercy, give us better and more precious than "the corn of the elect, and the wine springing forth virgins"? (Zach. IX, 17). O Jesus, from this living fountain I shall henceforth draw that pure and chaste charity, which causes me to love Thee in my neighbor, and that ardent and disinterested zeal, founded on self-denial and the desire to please Thee, which will cause me to be devoted to my neighbor's welfare. O Mary, Mother of mercy, deign to obtain for me a compassionate, courageous, generous and constant charity towards my neighbor.

First Friday in May.

Detachment of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

I. POINT.

The Heart of Jesus a Model of detachment.

What a beautiful sight to see some great monarch, lavishing on his subjects an abundance of goods, and himself leading a life of detachment from the wealth and splendor that surround him! His soul, raised far above this world, seeks God only, and longs solely for the divine glory and the accomplishment of the divine will. Such was St. Louis, king of France, who reckoned among the most signal benefits he had received from heaven, that of his captivity and sufferings in Egypt. How much of true greatness and nobility in such sentiments! But what shall we say of the immortal King, who created the world, and who, possessing in the highest heavens the most sublime and wealthy of kingdoms, came down from the throne of His grandeur to embrace poverty among us? The whole universe is His, and He is born in an abandoned grotto, and He

lives on earth as a poor exile, suffering privations in Egypt, and at Nazareth earning His bread by the sweat of His brow. Like a traveller hastening by, He goes through Judea, spreading His doctrine and His benefits, and has not even where to rest His head. Not satisfied with embracing all kinds of hardships, He even renounces His reputation, and dies on the cross as the meanest of slaves and the most guilty of criminals. O unexampled prodigy! God Himself, to whom every thing belongs, becomes the poorest of men, and even of slaves! He, the glory of the angels, becomes the outcast of the people, insulted by the vilest rabble. He, the almighty and eternal Monarch of the universe, is treated like a mere worm, and given up to the most disgraceful of deaths. And after His death, He has not even a winding-sheet, a sepulchre, for He had given up every thing for the love of us. O love, thou didst rob Jesus of all that He possessed by the right of creation, and hast left to Him only our hearts which He reconquered by the redemption.—But let us not, by our attachment to worldly esteem and honor, to our comforts, to our sensual gratification, steal from Him, who has redeemed them, our hearts which should be wholly His.—O Heart of Jesus, take full possession of my affections and of my will; be the sole object of my thoughts and aspirations, my only good, my only love in time and in eternity.

II. POINT.

“It is rare”, says the Imitation of Christ, “to find a man sufficiently advanced in the spiritual life, to be detached from all things, for who will find the voluntary poor man disengaged from the least affections to created things?” And even if one is no longer bound to any thing in this world, is he, for this reason, detached also from his self-love, from his own gratification? Who

remains indifferent, when he is despoiled of his reputation, of his good name, when some one wounds his self-love, contradicts his tastes, his opinions, his will? If God alone was sufficient for him, would he murmur on such occasions? Would he not then be resigned to see himself stripped of everything except of his beloved Redeemer? The best means of attaining this perfect detachment is to strive to love Jesus Christ above all things. As the sacred fire that was burning in His Heart impelled Him to immolate every thing for our sake, so our attachment to the Man-God will cause us to sacrifice every thing that is not Jesus Christ. Let us often consider Him on Calvary, where He is reduced to the most complete destitution. Being suspended between heaven and earth, to what can He cling, unless it be to the glory of His Father and to the salvation of our souls? In immolating Himself, He renounces all things and unreservedly delivers Himself to us. If He allows His Heart to be opened after His death, it is that He may give us the little blood that still remains therein. O my Jesus, when I contemplate Thee nailed to the cross, crowned with thorns, saturated with opprobrium, I can have no doubt of the perfect detachment of Thy Heart and of the purity of Thy love. Who will give me to die, like Thee, to every thing created? Grant me a spark of that glowing furnace that consumes Thee. Then, wholly separated from things transitory, I will exclaim with the author of the Imitation: "To be without Jesus is a cruel hell; to be with Jesus is a paradise of delights. What can the world give me, if I have not Jesus? Foolish and vain is he who desires any thing besides Jesus. To live without Jesus is the height of indigence; but to possess Him is the height of riches."—O my God, my Saviour, my

treasure and my life, grant me, through the intercession of Mary Immaculate, the grace from this day to renounce sincerely all that I shall have to leave at the hour of death, and often to think of Thee, for Thou art the sovereign and eternal Good. When, at my last hour, all will abandon me, Thou alone wilt remain to me. Be then henceforward the God of my heart, my only love and my portion for eternity.

First Friday in June.

Purity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

I. POINT.

The Heart of Jesus loves purity.

“O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory; for the memory thereof is immortal, because it is known both with God and with men. When it is present, they imitate it; and they desire it, when it hath withdrawn itself, and it triumpheth crowned forever, winning the reward of undefiled conflicts” (Wis. IV, 1, 2). Because of His love for the angelic virtue Jesus Christ wished to be born of a Virgin, of the purest of virgins, who had not in the least contracted the original stain. His foster-father, His precursor, His beloved disciple were virginal souls. He willed that His Church and her priesthood should likewise be virginal, and He delights to dwell and converse with pure souls, in order to load them with His favors. Though He was falsely accused of all crimes, He never allowed His purity to be suspected. He tenderly loved children on account of their innocence, for, said He, “of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Mat. XIX, 14). Let us examine whether, in regard to continence and chastity, we are like children. Have we the candor of their thoughts, the uprightness of their intentions, the nobil-

ity of their sentiments? Do we daily draw these dispositions from their true source—the Heart of Jesus in the Eucharist? “As I live by the Father”, says our Lord, “so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me” (John VI, 58). To live by Jesus is to undergo the influence of His grace and virtues, to have a horror for the impure vice and to shun it at every cost, and, consequently, to repel victoriously all the assaults of the unclean spirit, to preserve ourselves from the contagion of the world, and to subject in us our senses to reason and our reason to God.—O Jesus, who didst become a Sacrament for my soul, how can I find better security in my combats than to take refuge near Thee, to enter in spirit into Thy tabernacle, to conceal myself in the sacred ciborium and to penetrate into Thy glorious wounds, and especially into that of Thy divine Heart, which is so formidable to my enemies? Give me the grace to find there the courage to repress concupiscence, to conquer temptation, to mortify my senses, and ever to have recourse to Thy immaculate Mother.

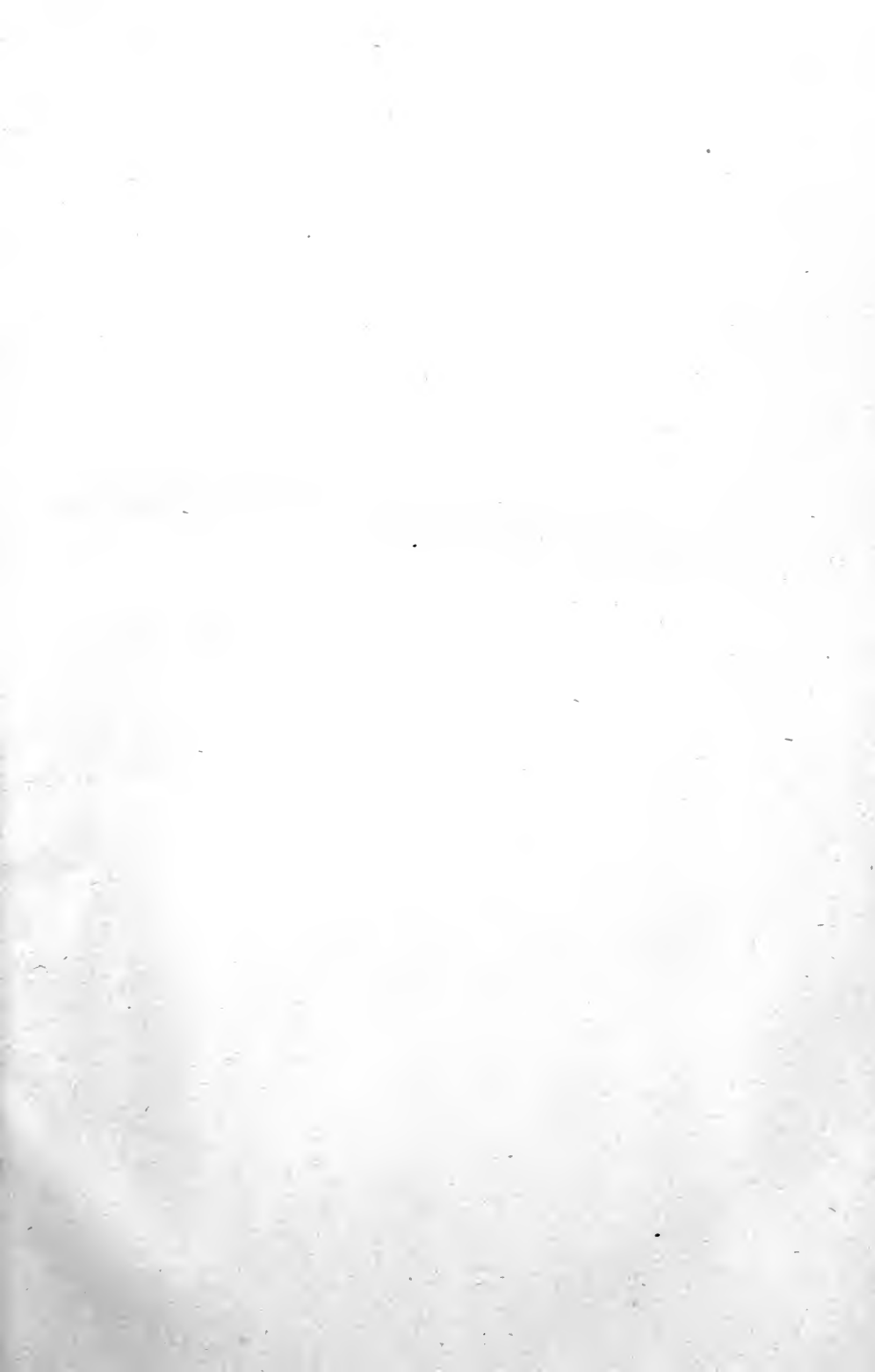
II. POINT.

Motives for practising purity after the example of Jesus.

Chastity, says St. Augustine, renders man heavenly and like unto the blessed spirits. It makes man even superior to the angels, says St. Bernard; and, in fact, if the angel's purity is more felicitous, that of man is more courageous, because of the struggles and victories it requires. “He that loveth cleanness of heart”, says the Holy Ghost, “shall have the king (Jesus) for his friend” (Prov. XXII, 11). God will allow the pure to become familiar with Him, and will grant them a special and all-powerful protection and a particular glory before Him, and, as He says, “I will give them an everlasting name, which shall never perish” (Is. LVI, 5). St.

Athanasius relates of the solitary St. Abraham, that our Lord had in a sensible manner imparted to him the spiritual goods with which He favors chaste hearts. "His countenance", he says, "was as beautiful as an immortal flower, and the purity of his soul shone on his forehead; for in his inmost heart there was an inexhaustible source of joy, fed by his complete detachment and his perfect innocence." Chastity raises our mind and will above sensual gratification, and enables us to taste with the angels so pure a contentment, so profound a peace, that in a few days we are thereby amply compensated for the hardships and combats of our whole life. If we wish to share in the ineffable lights and joys imparted by the Heart of Jesus to those who love Him, we ought, as far as we can, to imitate His spotless purity. Let us draw from this divine Heart noble thoughts, exalted sentiments and heavenly aspirations. Let us attach our desires and affections to His immutable Beauty, which charms the seraphim, ravishes the angelic choirs and all the heroic souls of the saints, and should ravish our hearts also. — O adorable Heart, focus of sacred love, inspire me with the desire to become chaste and pure like the blessed spirits. Grant that I may mortify my eyes, practise sobriety and temperance, and at once invoke Thee in time of temptation. O immaculate heart of Mary, forever preserve me from the least stains contrary to purity.









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